



No. 92 Rs.

SAKSHI GOPAL

THE LEGEND OF A FAMOUS
TEMPLE NEAR PURI

Painted by
Shankar

Not far from Puri in Orissa stands the temple of Sakshi Gopal. Centuries have gone by but the legend that gave the deity this name is still popular, not only in the states of Orissa and the adjoining Andhra Pradesh but in other parts of our country as well.

Sakshi Gopal was worshipped in a temple in Andhra Pradesh for a long time. Then a king of Orissa brought him to the present site.

The hero of our story loved a girl of his own village. But he was poor and the girl's father avaricious. Fate placed the father in a situation from which our hero rescued him. The father was pleased and promised the young man the hand of his daughter. The only witness to this offer was the deity, the promise being made in front of his temple.

Once he is back safe in his village, the father not taking into account this "witness", denies the promise to our hero.

Alone and forlorn, our hero implores the deity to testify to his claim that the man's daughter had indeed been promised to him.

How the deity comes to his rescue and helps him win his bride is the legend colourfully retold in our Amar Chitra Katha.

SAKSHIGOPAL

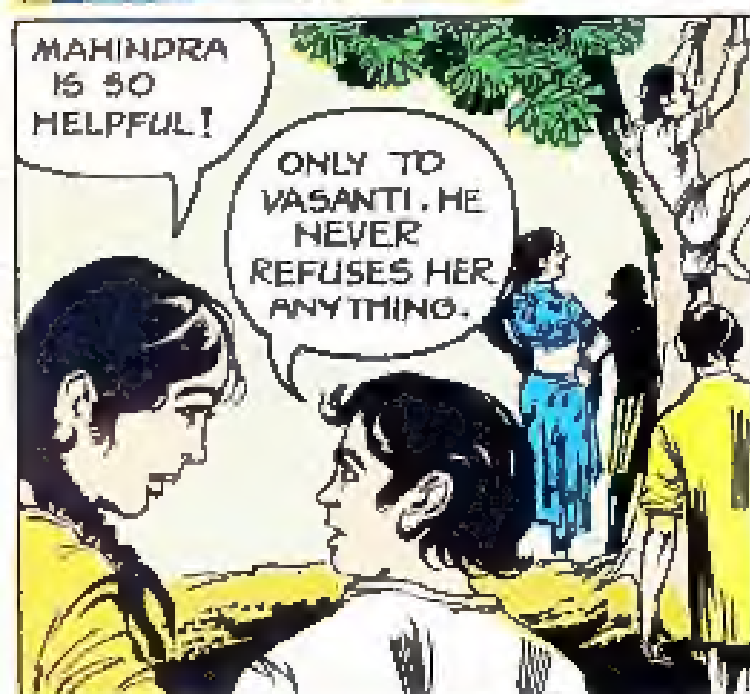
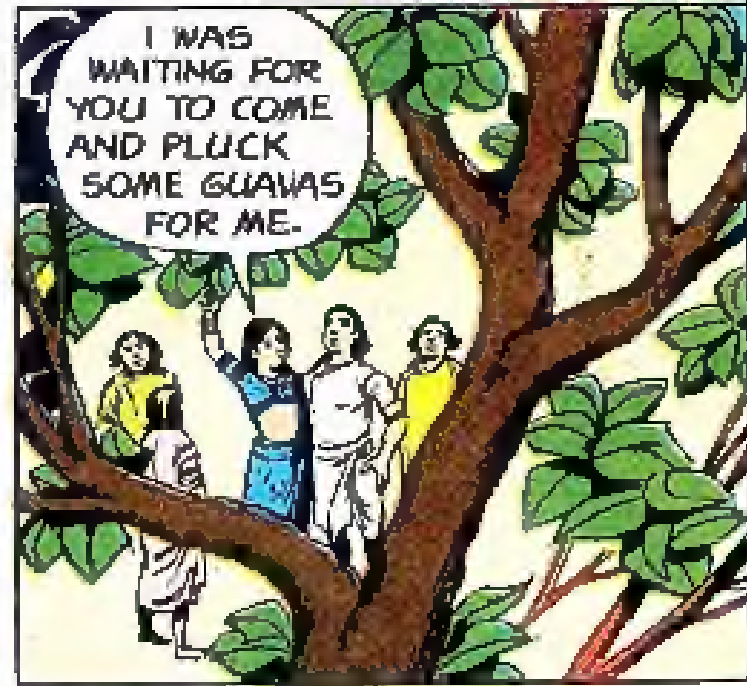


LONG LONG AGO, IN A SMALL VILLAGE LIVED RAGHAV AND RAGHABAI. THEIR ONLY CHILD, VASANTI, WAS A SWEET LITTLE GIRL WITH WHOM THE OTHER CHILDREN OF THE VILLAGE LOVED TO PLAY.

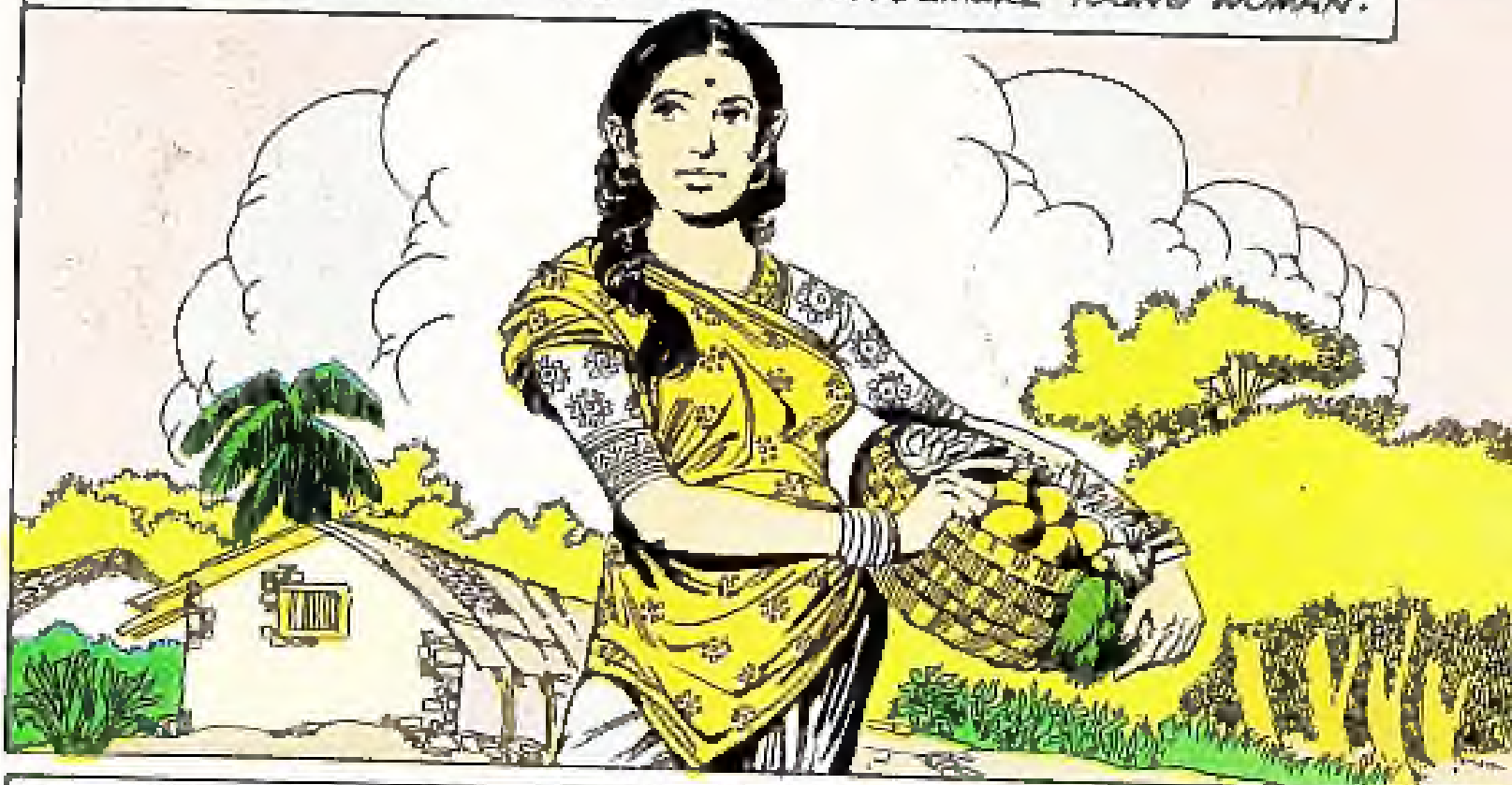
BUT VASANTI WOULD NEVER BEGIN A GAME WITHOUT HER FAVOURITE PLAY-MATE, MAHINDRA, A POOR PEDESTUTE ORPHAN, WAS THERE.



* LITERALLY BROTHER; A TERM OF AFFECTION

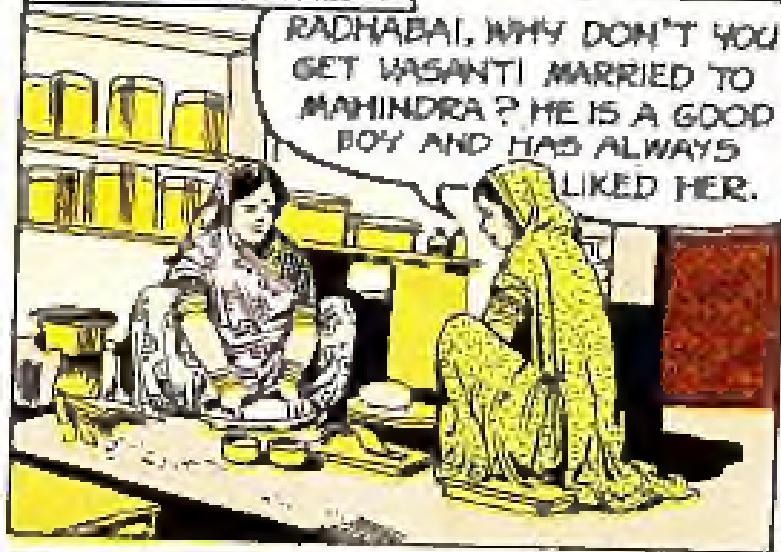


THE CHILD VASANTI SOON GREW UP TO BE A DEMURE YOUNG WOMAN.



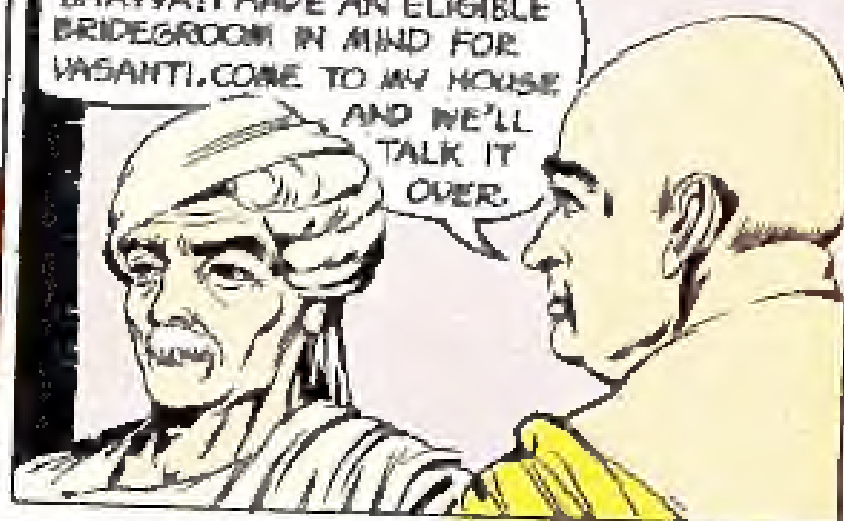
ONE DAY, THE VILLAGE NURSE CAME TO SEE HER MOTHER.

RADHABAI, WHY DON'T YOU GET VASANTI MARRIED TO MAHINDRA? HE IS A GOOD BOY AND HAS ALWAYS LIKED HER.

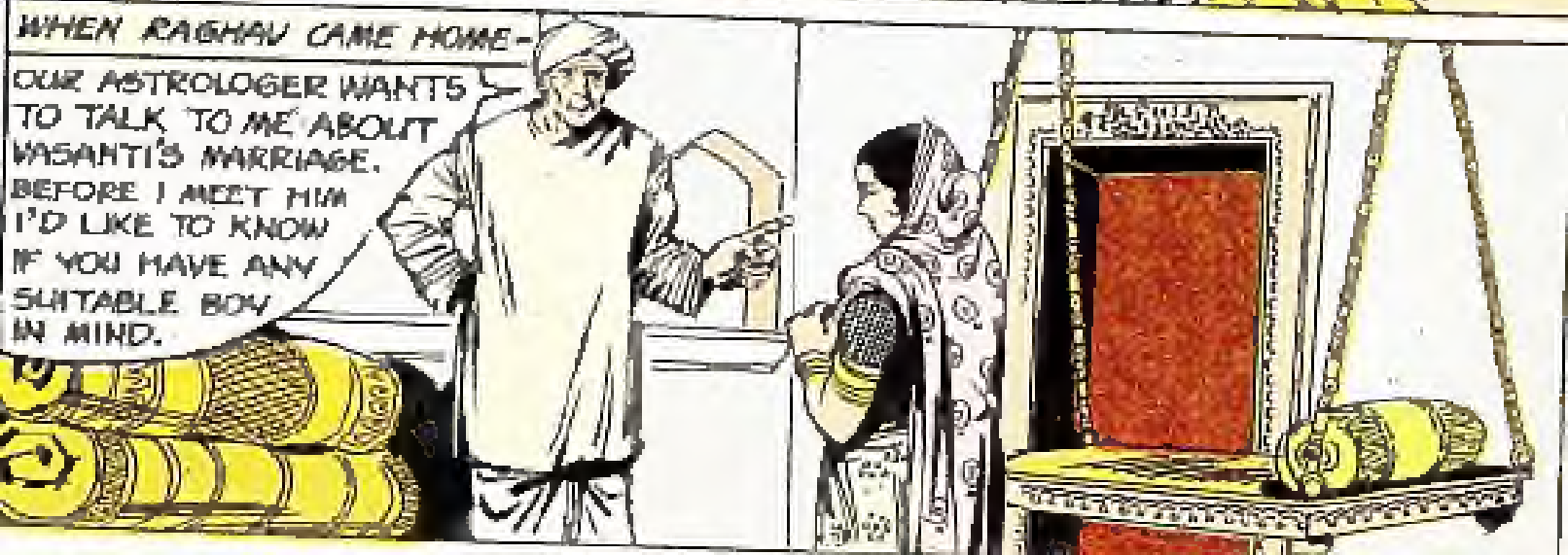


MEANWHILE THE VILLAGE ASTROLOGER MET RAGHAV.

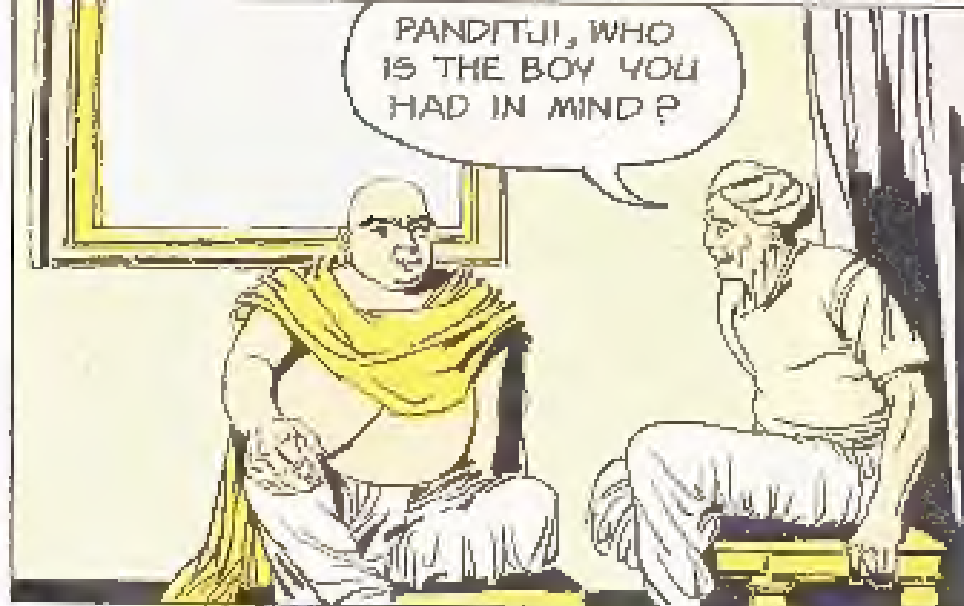
BHAYVA! I HAVE AN ELIGIBLE BRIDEGROOM IN MIND FOR VASANTI. COME TO MY HOUSE AND WE'LL TALK IT OVER.



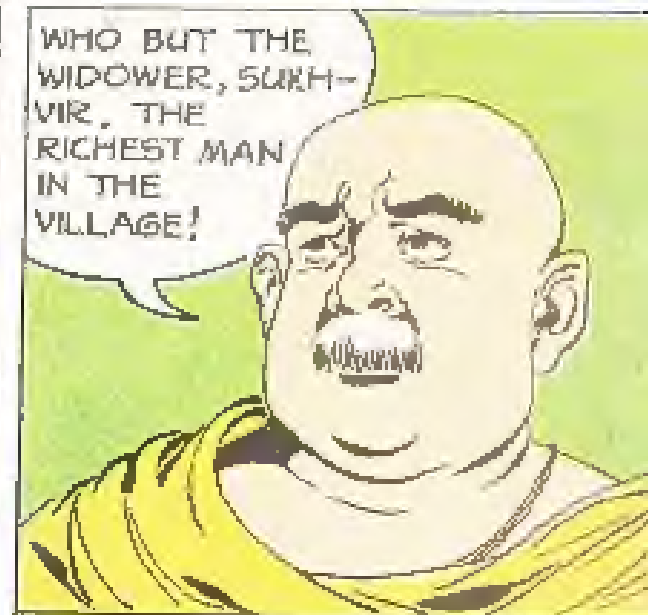
WHEN RAGHAV CAME HOME - OUR ASTROLOGER WANTS TO TALK TO ME ABOUT VASANTI'S MARRIAGE. BEFORE I MEET HIM I'D LIKE TO KNOW IF YOU HAVE ANY SUITABLE BOY IN MIND.







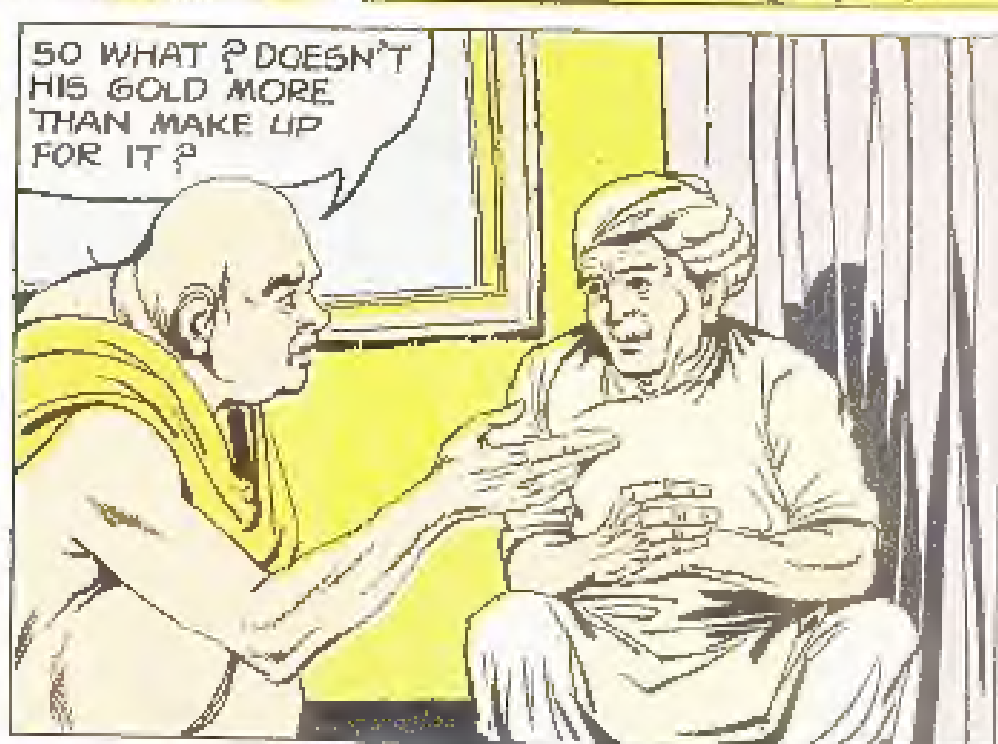
PANDITJI, WHO IS THE BOY YOU HAD IN MIND?



WHO BUT THE WIDOWER, SUKHVIR, THE RICHEST MAN IN THE VILLAGE!



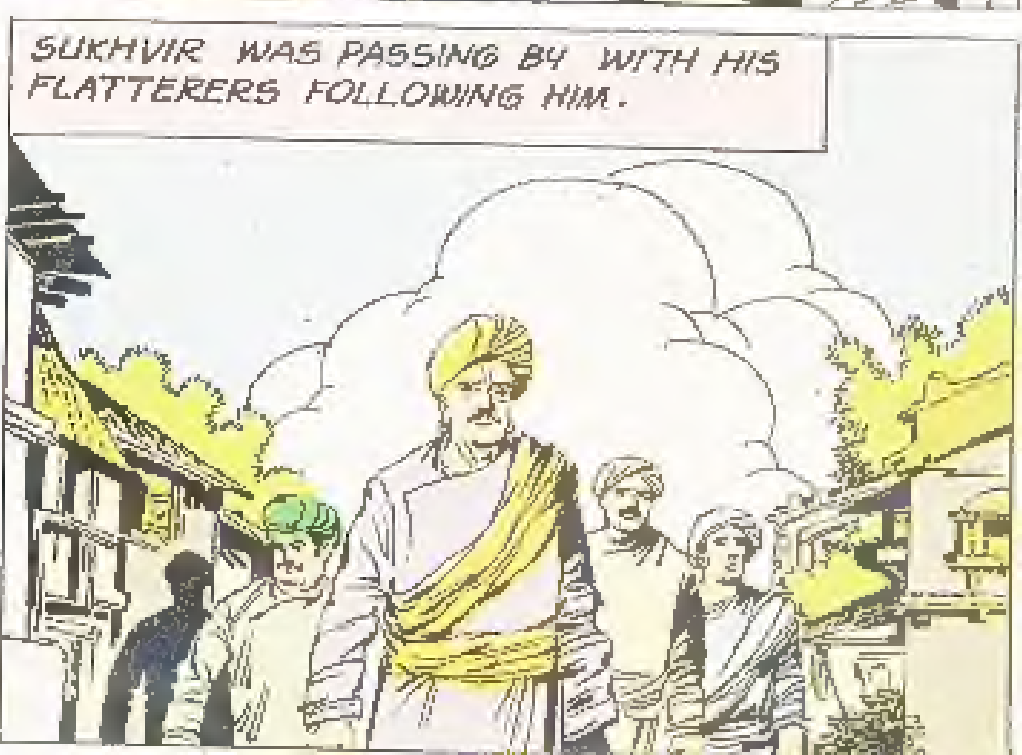
BUT... ISN'T HE RATHER OLD?



SO WHAT? DOESN'T HIS GOLD MORE THAN MAKE UP FOR IT?



LOOK, THERE HE GOES - LIKE A KING!



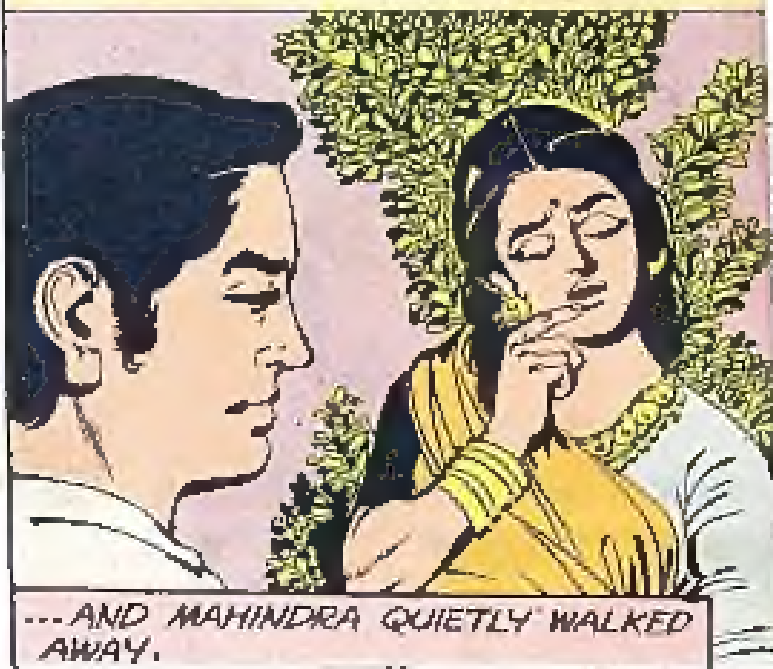
SUKHVIR WAS PASSING BY WITH HIS FLATTERERS FOLLOWING HIM.

MEANWHILE MAHINDRA MET VASANTI
ONE EVENING.



I HAVE COME TO
SAY FAREWELL. I'M
LEAVING FOR THE
TEMPLE TOWN
TO MAKE A
LIVING.

VASANTI, AT ONCE SAD AND SHY,
REMAINED SPEECHLESS ...



... AND MAHINDRA QUIETLY WALKED
AWAY.

A FEW DAYS LATER, SUKHVIR
MET RAGHAV.

RAGHAVJI, I AM PREPARING TO GO
ON A PILGRIMAGE TO GOPALJI'S
TEMPLE AT THE HOLY TOWN.
PANDITJI AND A FEW OTHER
VILLAGERS WILL BE GOING
WITH ME. WOULD YOU LIKE
TO COME WITH US?



I WOULD
CONSIDER
IT A
PRIVILEGE!

RAGHAV WAS OVERJOYED.



EVEN
BEFORE
HE HAS BE-
COME MY
SON-IN-LAW,
HE IS GEN-
EROUS TO ME!

ON THE APPOINTED DAY, RAGHAV LEFT
HOME WITH THE PILGRIMS.

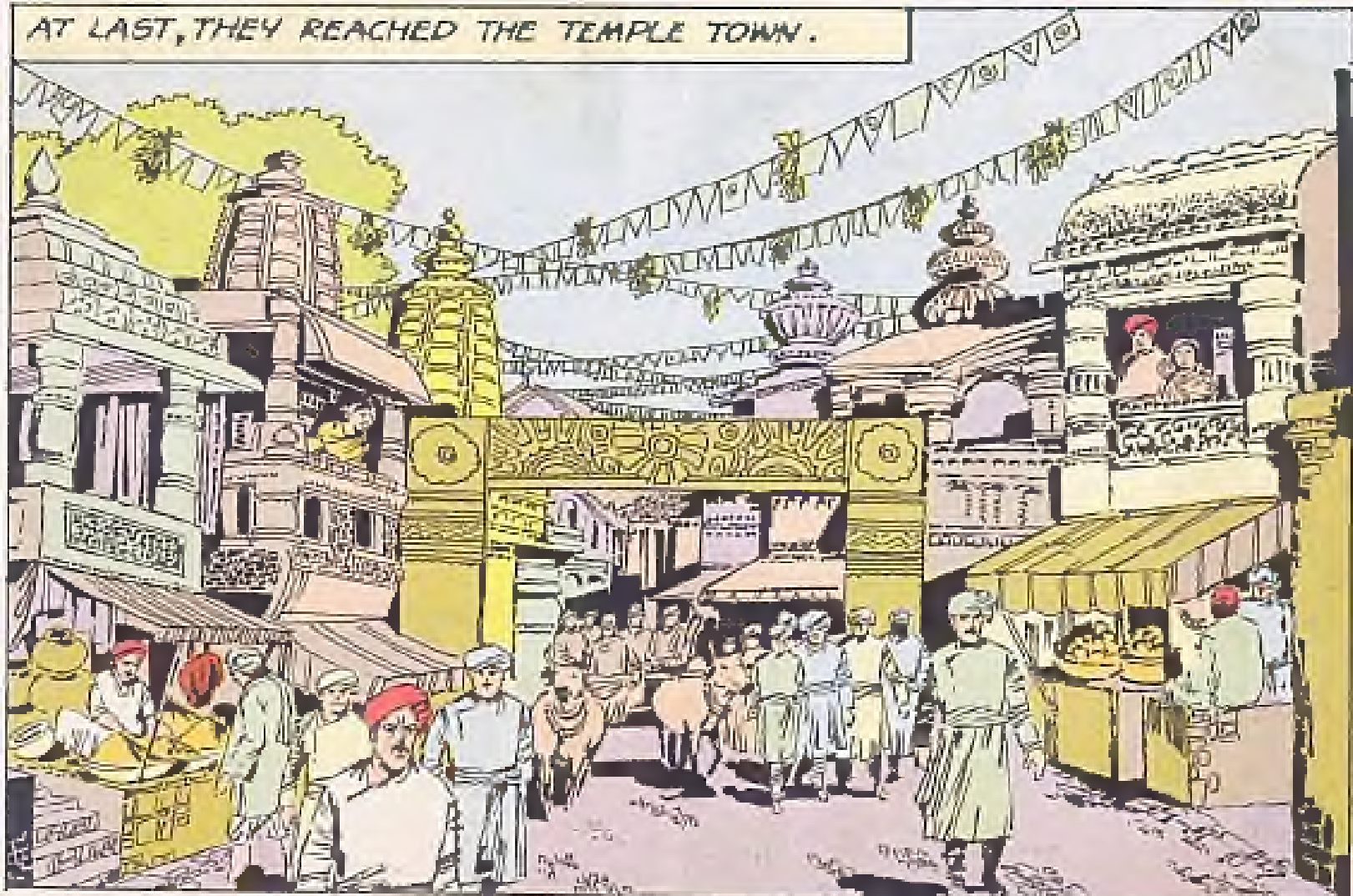


AS SOON AS WE
RETURN, VASANTI
WILL BE MARRIED

IT WAS A PLEASANT JOURNEY. THE PILGRIMS HAD TO TRAVEL THROUGH MANY A VILLAGE AND LOVELY FIELD.



AT LAST, THEY REACHED THE TEMPLE TOWN.



THEY PUT UP AT A DHARMASHALA CLOSE TO THE TEMPLE.



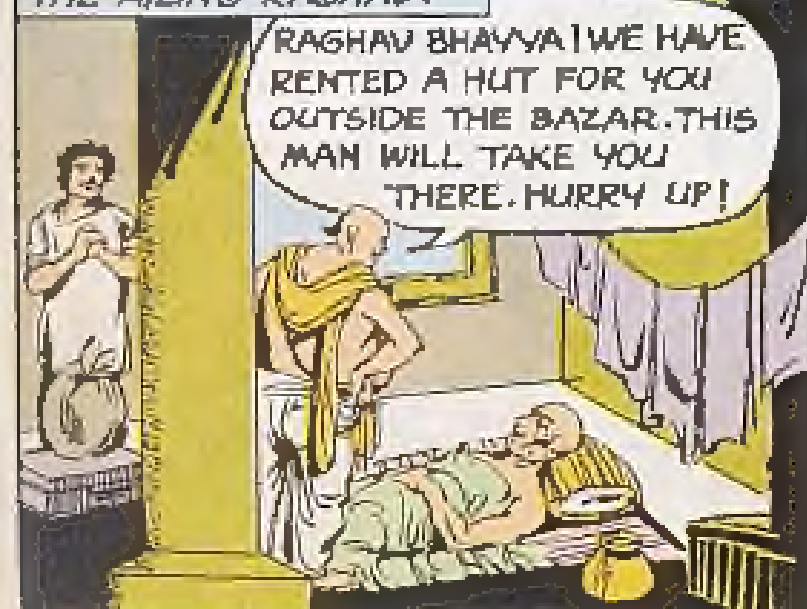
ONE DAY, THE PANDIT CAME RUNNING TO SUKHVIR.



SUKHVIR WAS HORRIFIED.



A LITTLE LATER, THE PANDIT MET THE AILING RAGHAV.

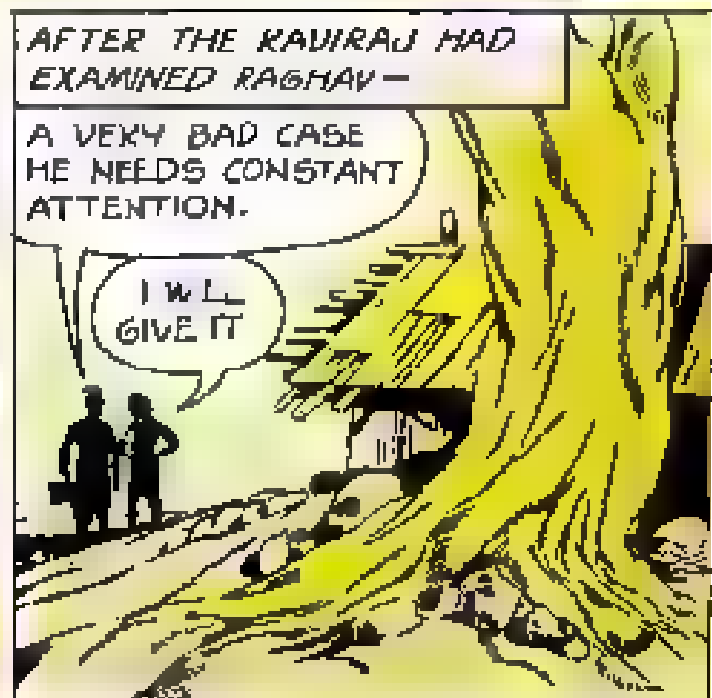


BURNING WITH FEVER, RAGHAV SOMEHOW REACHED THE HUT.



MEANWHILE, MAHINDRA, WHO WAS IN THE SAME TOWN, MET A MEMBER OF SUKHVIR'S PARTY.

RAGHAV SUFFERED ALONE IN A DARK, DESERTED HUT.



* A PHYSICIAN WELL VERSED IN AYURVEDIC MEDICINE.



A FEW DAYS LATER, THE PANDIT CAME TO RAGHAV.

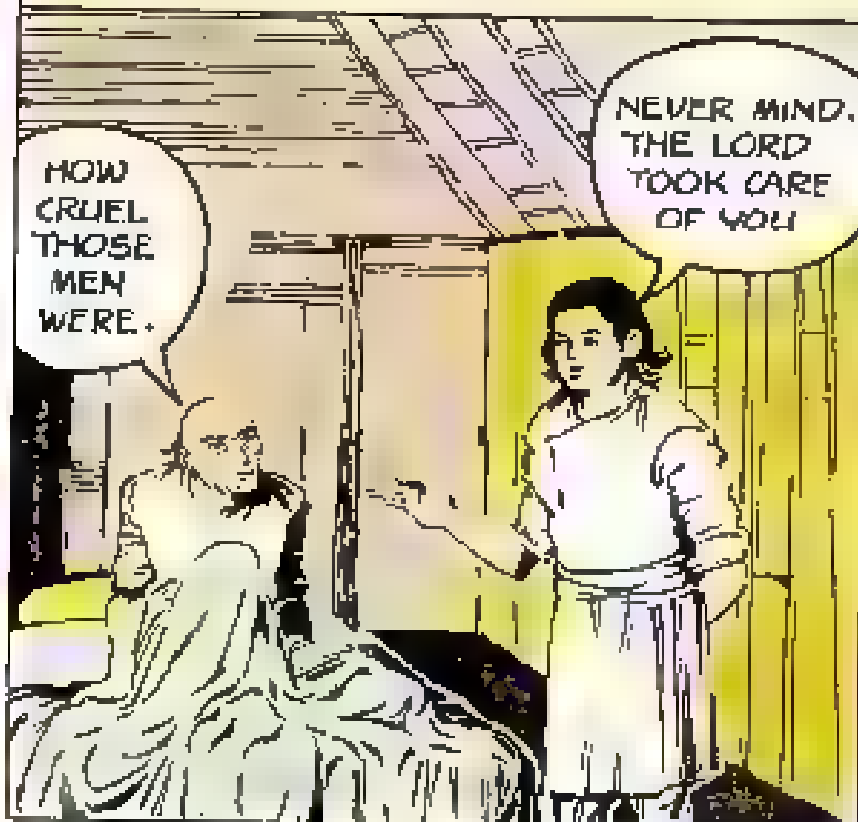
WE ARE RETURNING HOME TODAY, BUT DO NOT GRIEVE. ANYONE WHO DIES HERE, IS GIVEN A DECENT CREMATION I HEAR.



RAGHAV, HOWEVER, DID NOT DIE. WITH MAHINDRA'S DEVOTED CARE, HE WAS SOON WELL ENOUGH TO SIT UP.

HOW CRUEL THOSE MEN WERE.

NEVER MIND. THE LORD TOOK CARE OF YOU.



YOU ARE RIGHT, MY SON. WHAT A PITY, I HAVEN'T YET BEEN TO SEE THE LORD.



I WILL TAKE YOU TO HIS TEMPLE NOW.



IT WAS A DAY OF SPECIAL PUJA* AND AMERICANS PLAYED THEIR INSTRUMENTS
IN FRONT OF THE TEMPLE.



THE AARATI** WAS GOING ON.



MAHINDRA LED RAGHAV THROUGH THE CROWD.

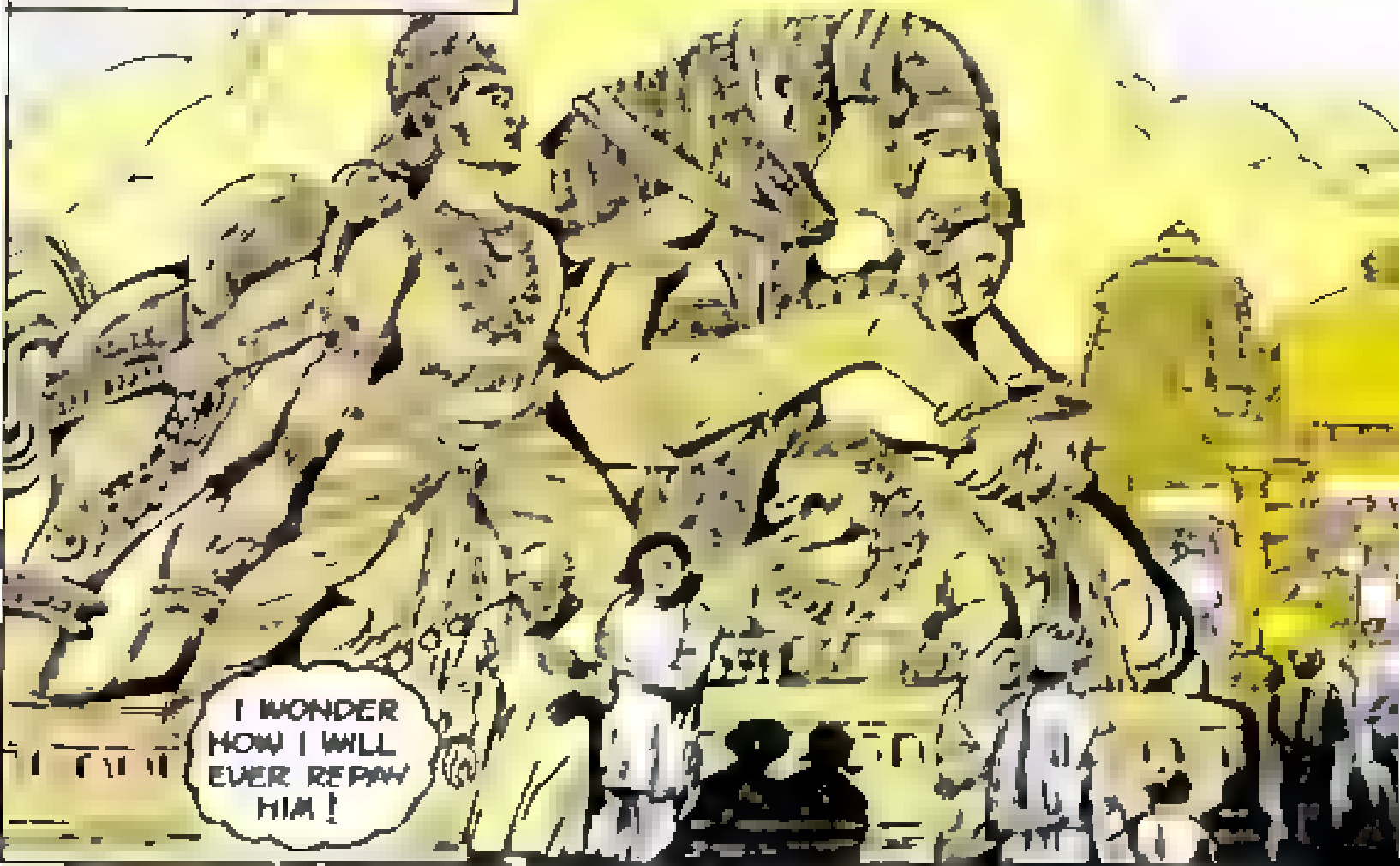


ALL THEN PROSTRATED THEMSELVES AT THE FEET OF THE GURU

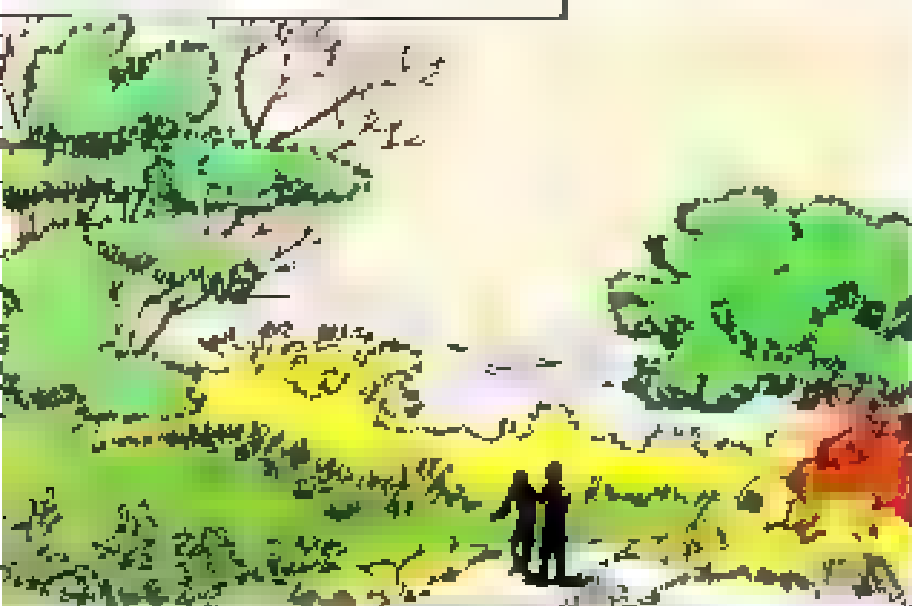


• D T 121 • REMOVAL OF A DEITY • • THE FOLLOWING RITE OF THE WORKSHIP

RAGHAV WAS DELIGHTED.



A FEW DAYS LATER, MAHINDRA AND RAGHAV LEFT FOR THEIR VILLAGE.



YOU ARE
TIRED. LET
US REST
FOR A
WHILE



ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE VILLAGE,
THEY MET RADHABAI AND VASANTI



WHEN WE HEARD YOU WERE
ILL, WE BECAME DESPERATE.
AT LAST, WE DECIDED TO
COME TO THE TOWN.

GOD IS GREAT.
HE SENT MAHINDRA
TO HELP ME.

THEY SOON REACHED THE VILLAGE. SOME WERE
HAPPY TO SEE RAGHAV,
OTHERS WERE NOT.



OH! RAGHAV
BHAYYA! SO
YOU HAVE
RETURNED.

YES, AND
ALIVE TOO, IN
SPITE OF YOUR
CALLOUS
BEHAVIOUR

LATER, RAGHAVA TOLD RAGHAVA AND VASANTI ALL THAT HAD HAPPENED.

BUT FOR MAHINDRA, I WOULD HAVE LIFTED

AS THE DAYS WENT BY, MAHINDRA HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO TALK TO VASANTI.

VASANTI, WHOSE FATHER HAD PROMISED TO MARRY HER AND ME WE WERE BOTH BE BARRIED

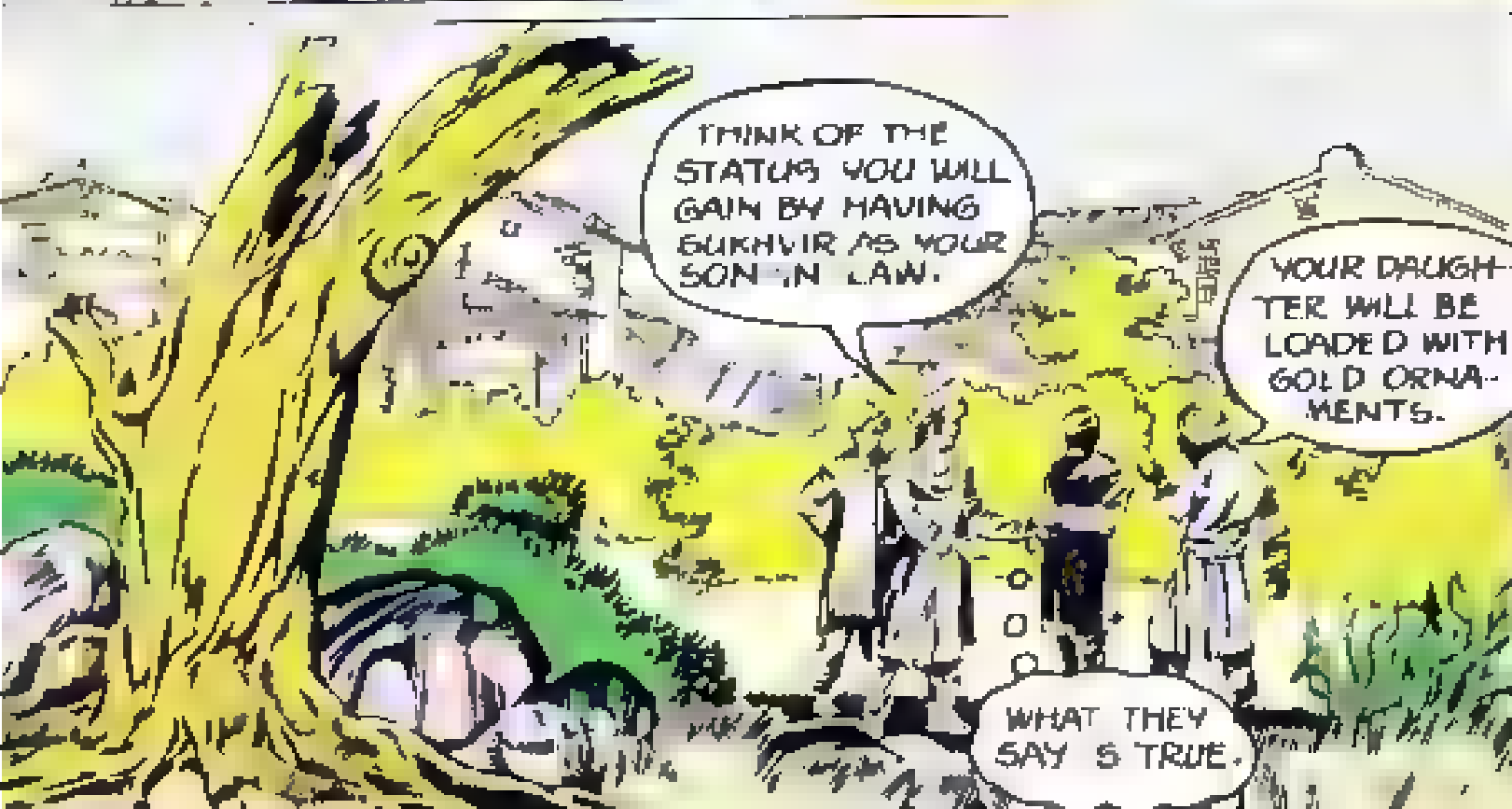
A FEW DAYS LATER, MAHINDRA HAD COME TO SEE VASANTI.

ISN'T THAT RAGHAVA'S DAUGHTER? I MUST REMIND THE PANDIT TO SEE RAGHAVA AGAIN

THE PANDIT ONLY SAID, "HINDRA, RAGHAVA"

I'M SORRY I'VE PROMISED MY DAUGHTER TO MAHINDRA

SUKHVIR'S FLATTERERS TRIED TO PERSUADE RAGHAV TO CHANGE HIS MIND.





BEFORE LONG, MAHINKA HEARD WHAT WAS GOING ON HE FELT MISERABLE



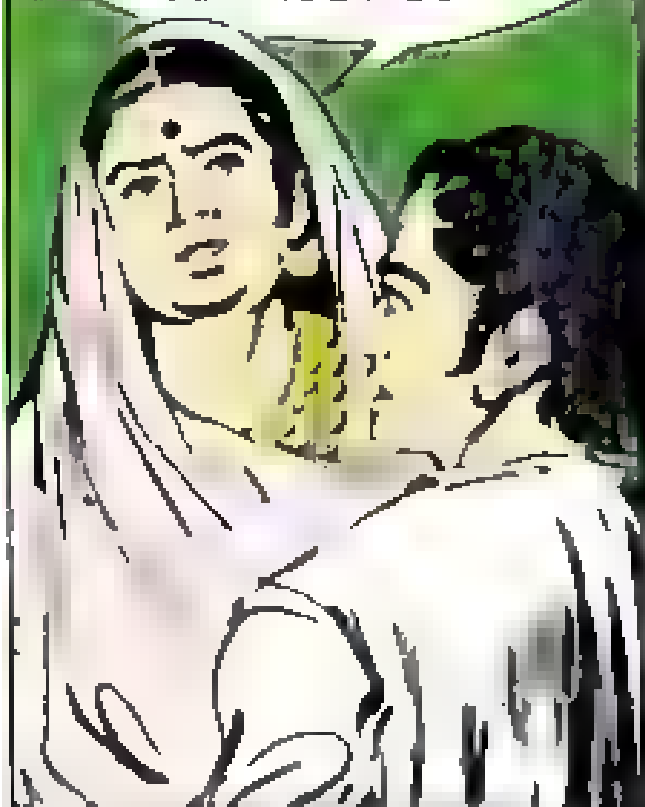
AS HE WAS ABOUT TO LEAVE .



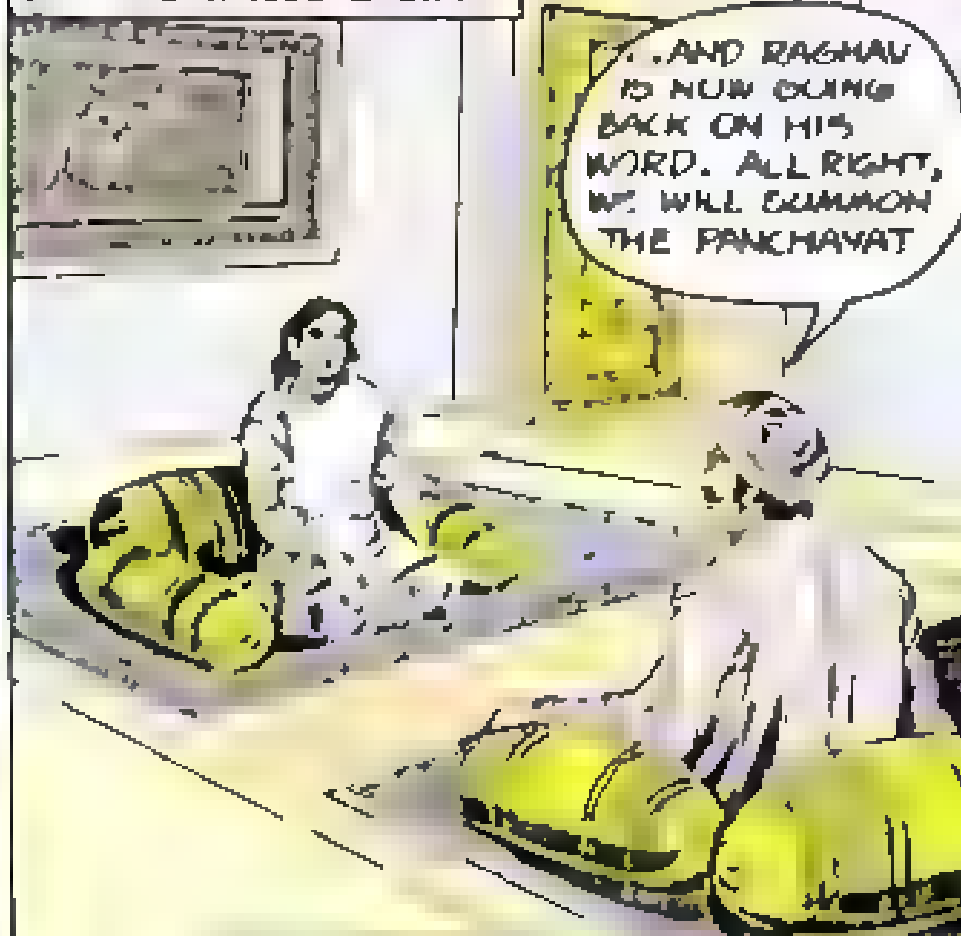
HOW CAN I DISGRACE RAGHAV BEFORE THE ENTIRE VILLAGE & NO, MOTHER I WON'T I CAN'T.

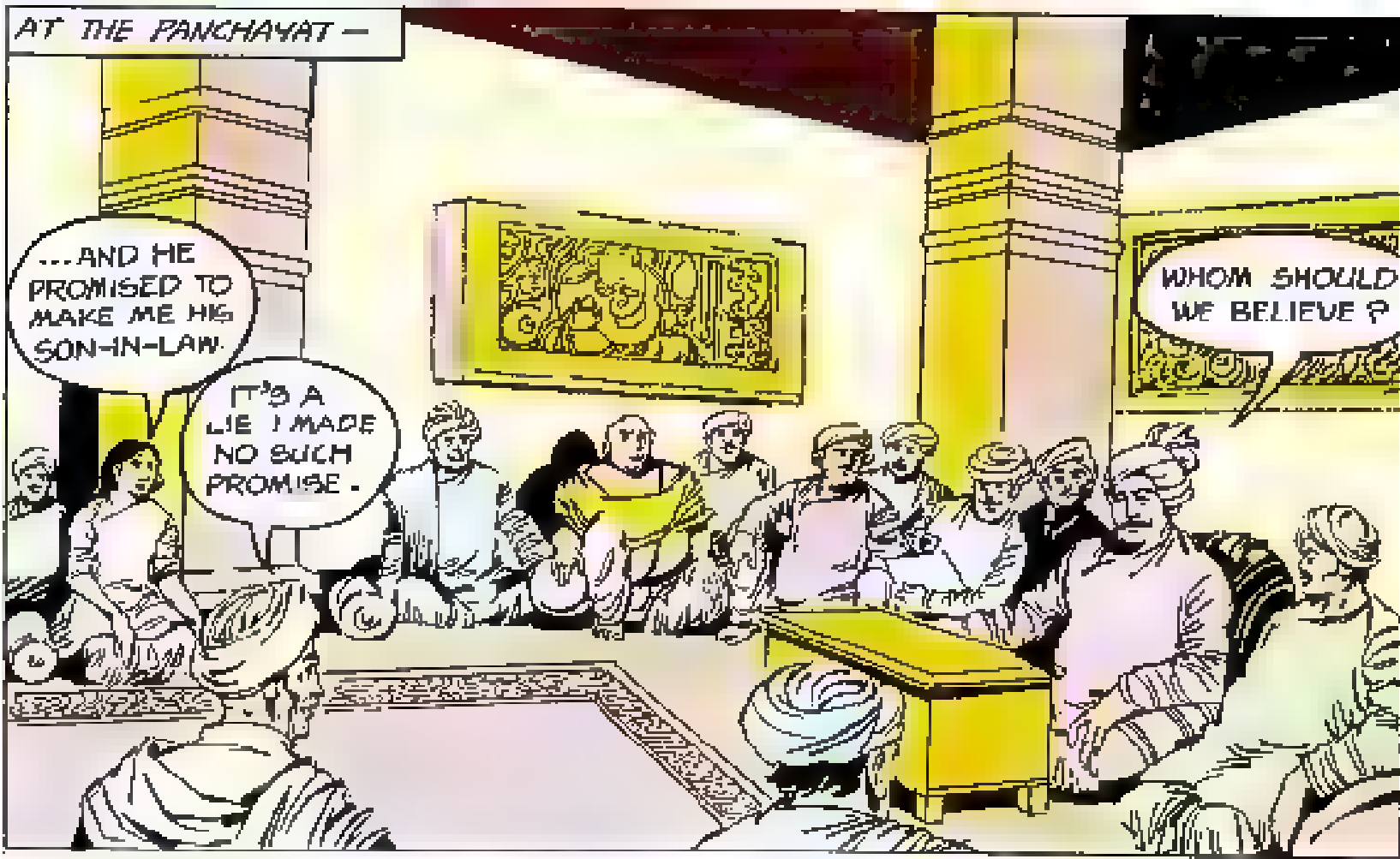


DOES MY DAUGHTER'S HAPP-
NESS MEAN NOTHING TO YOU?
SHE WILL SURELY DIE IF SHE IS
FORCED TO MARRY SUKHVIR.
ONLY YOU CAN SAVE HER
AND YOU MUST.



MAHINDRA NO LONGER HAD ANY DOUBTS HE
WENT TO SEE THE VILLAGE CHIEF AND TOLD
HIM THE WHOLE STORY





...AND HE PROMISED TO MAKE ME HIS SON-IN-LAW.

IT'S A LIE I MADE NO SUCH PROMISE.

WHOM SHOULD WE BELIEVE ?



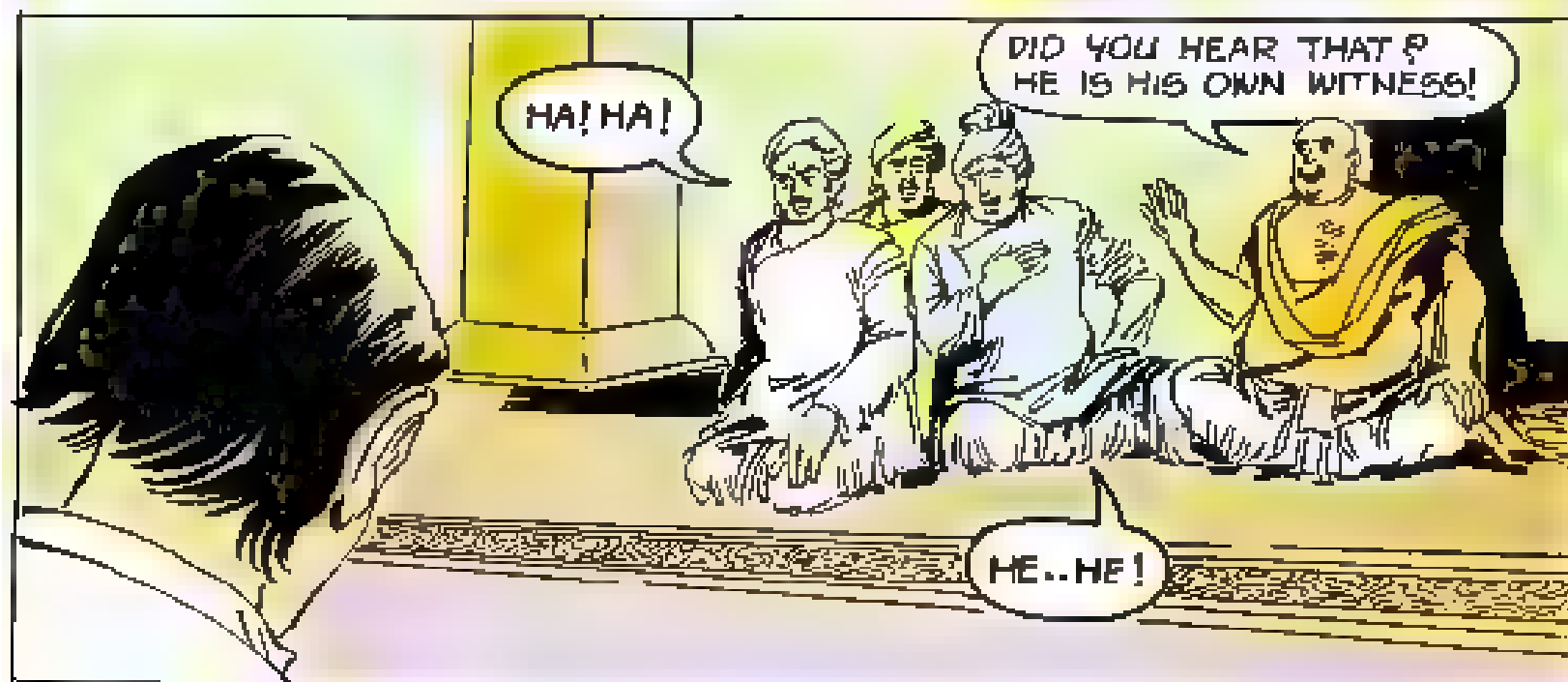
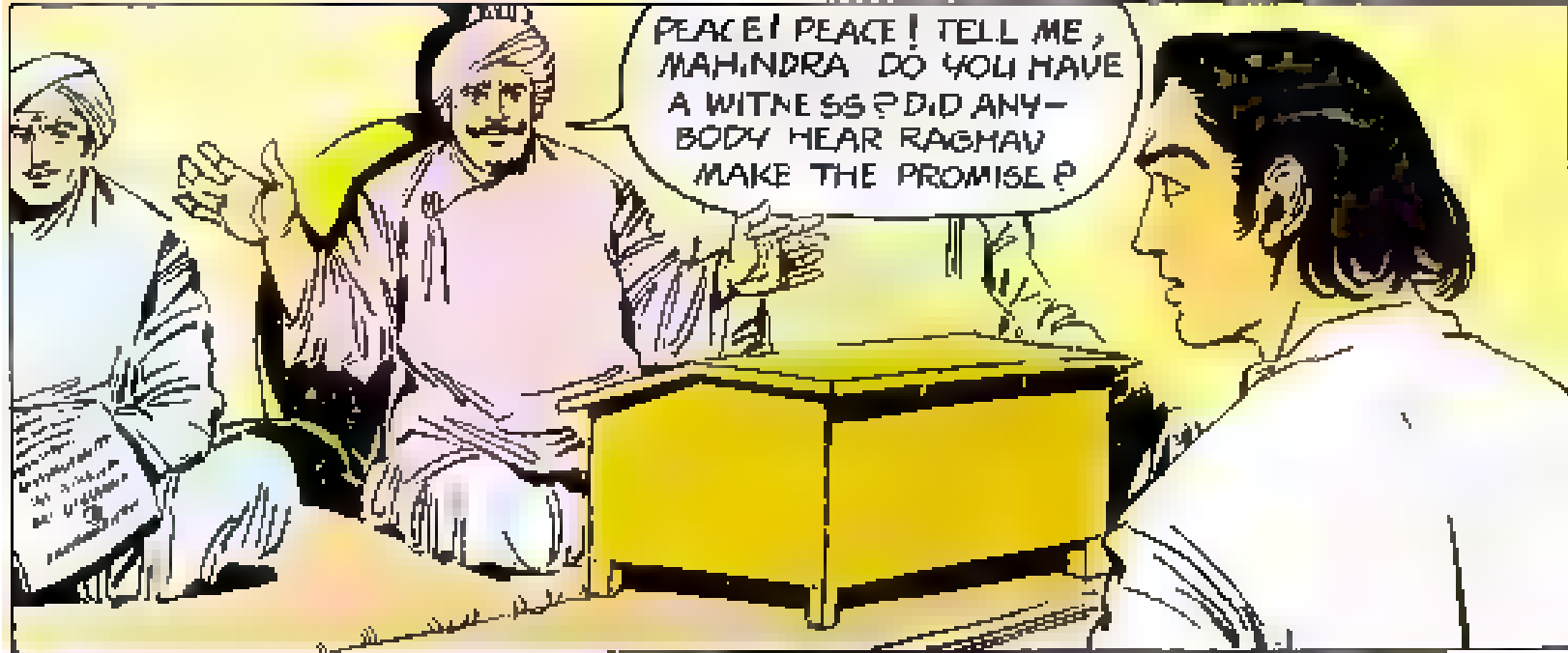
RAGHAV, OF COURSE! HE IS OLD AND HONEST.



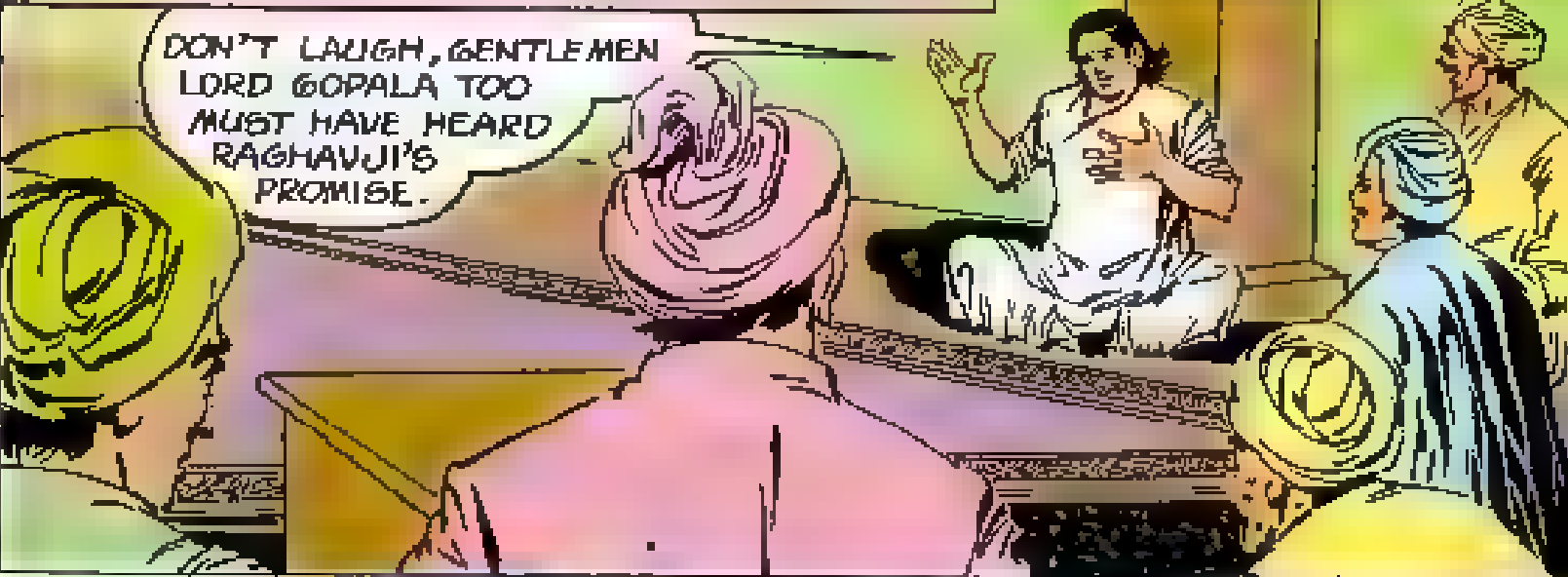
I AM SORRY TO HAVE TO SAY THIS. HE IS OLD, BUT NOT HONEST.



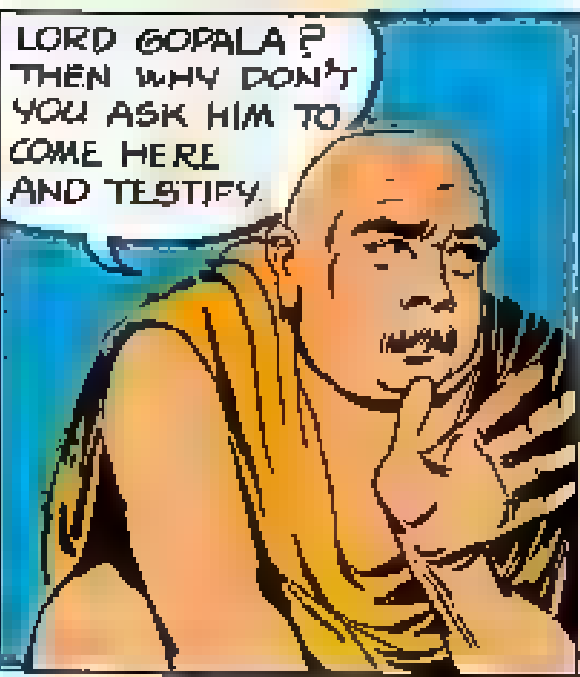
HOW DARE YOU INSULT ME ?



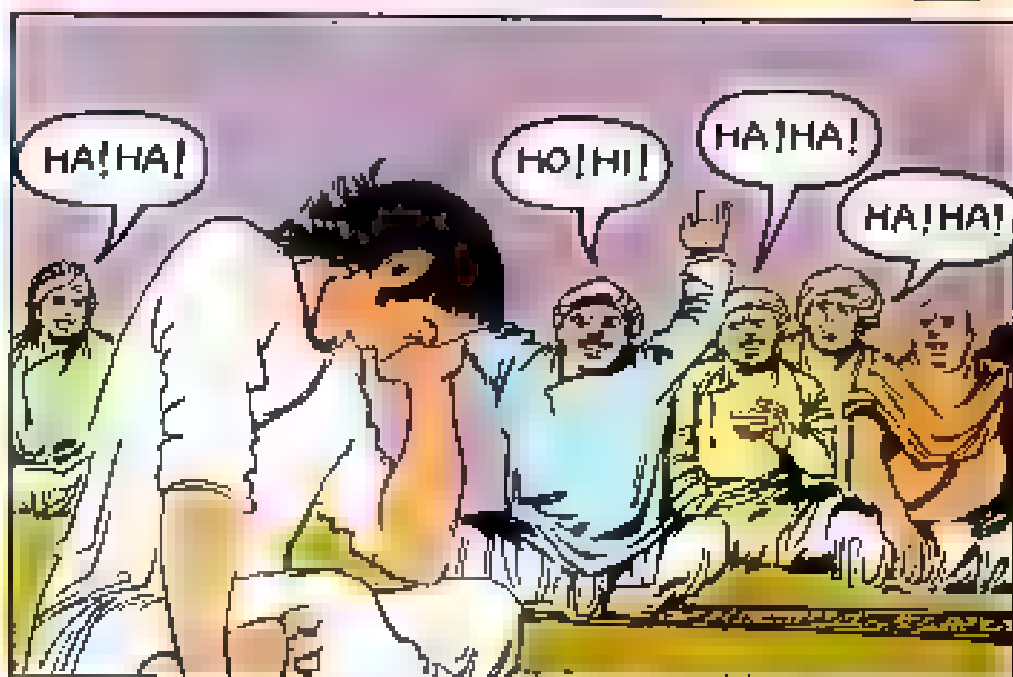
MAHINDRA SUDDENLY REMEMBERED SOMETHING.



DON'T LAUGH, GENTLEMEN
LORD GOPALA TOO
MUST HAVE HEARD
RAGHAVJI'S
PROMISE.



LORD GOPALA?
THEN WHY DON'T
YOU ASK HIM TO
COME HERE
AND TESTIFY.

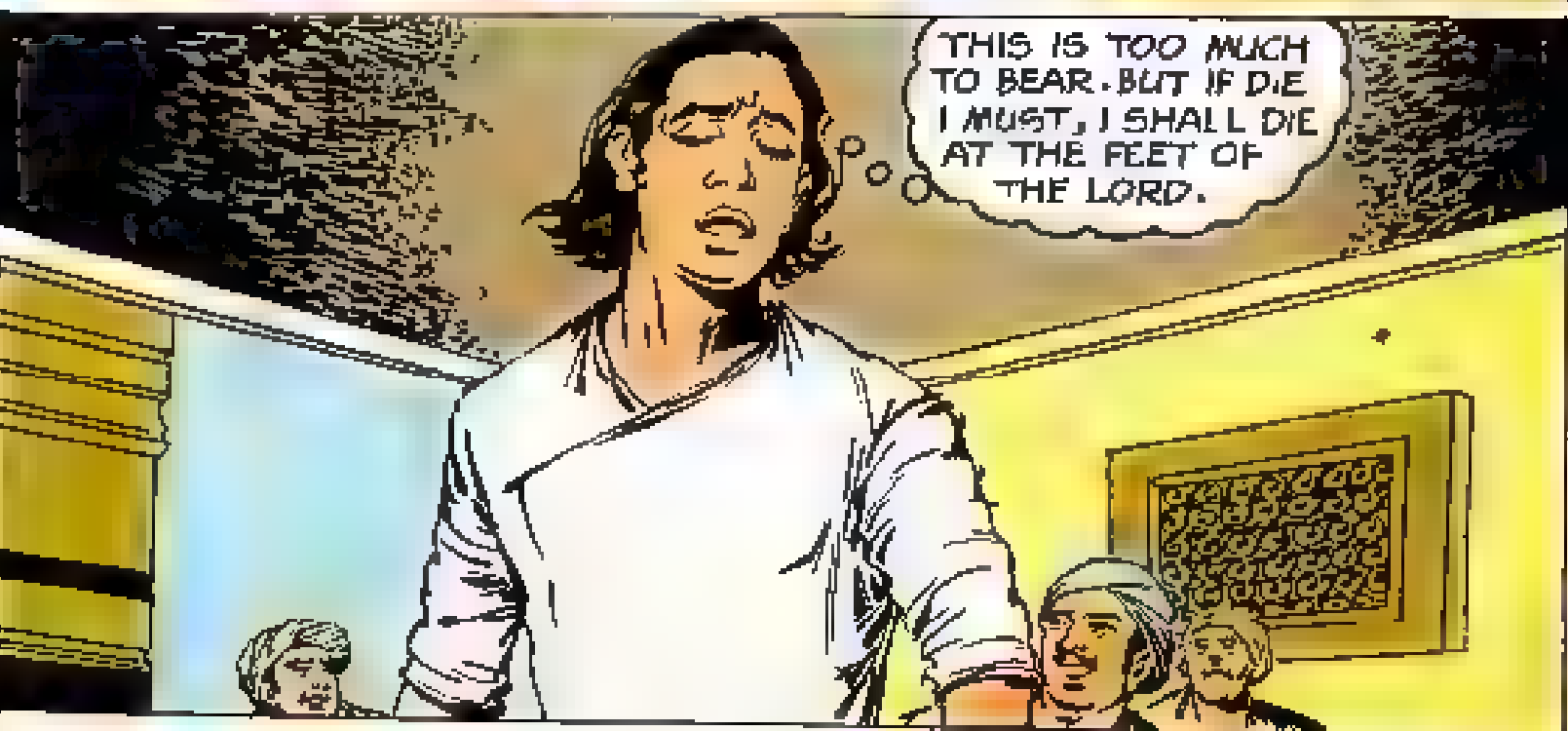


HA! HA!

HO! HI!

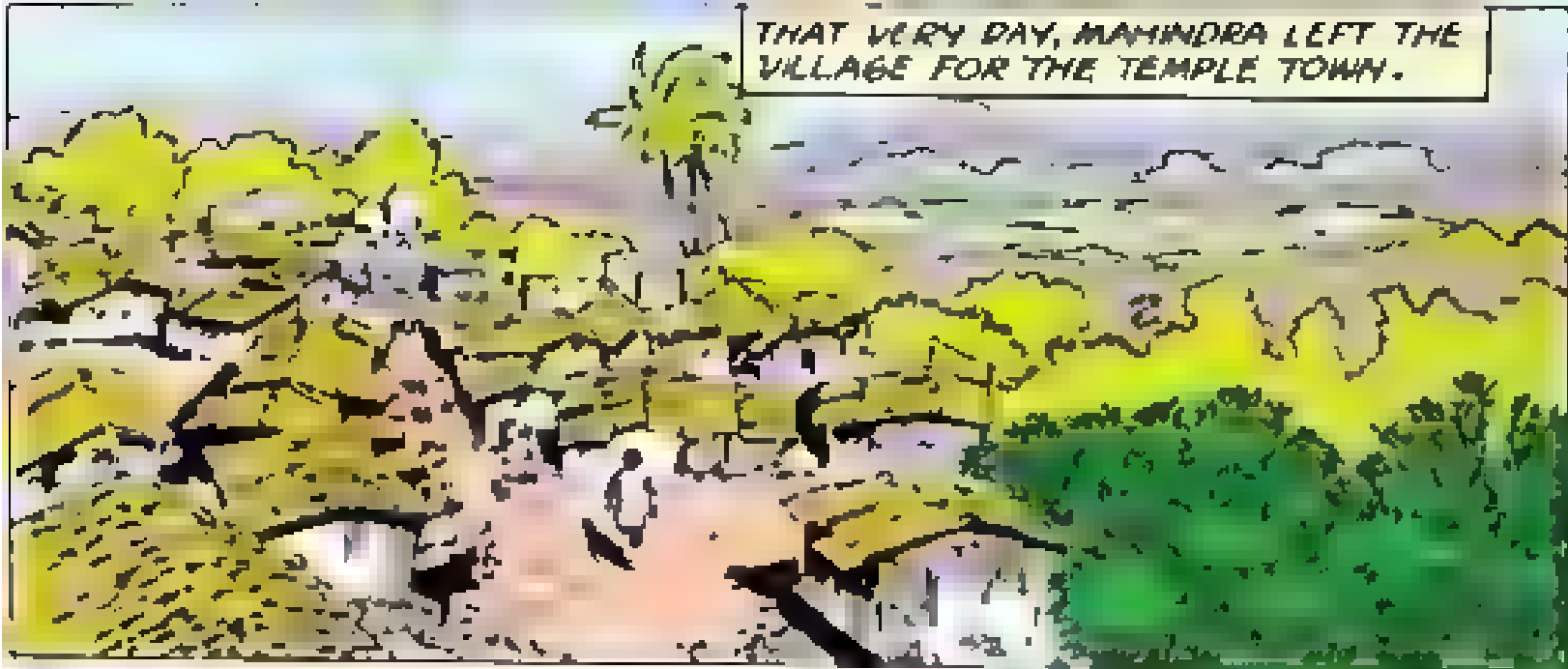
HA! HA!

HA! HA!



THIS IS TOO MUCH
TO BEAR. BUT IF DIE
I MUST, I SHALL DIE
AT THE FEET OF
THE LORD.

THAT VERY DAY, MAHINDRA LEFT THE VILLAGE FOR THE TEMPLE TOWN.



WHEN HE REACHED THE TEMPLE, EXHAUSTED, HE FELL ASLEEP ON THE STEPS.



THE LORD APPEARED



LORD, PLEASE
COME TO MY
VILLAGE AS MY
WITNESS. ONLY
IF YOU AGREE,
CAN VASANTI
BE SAVED.



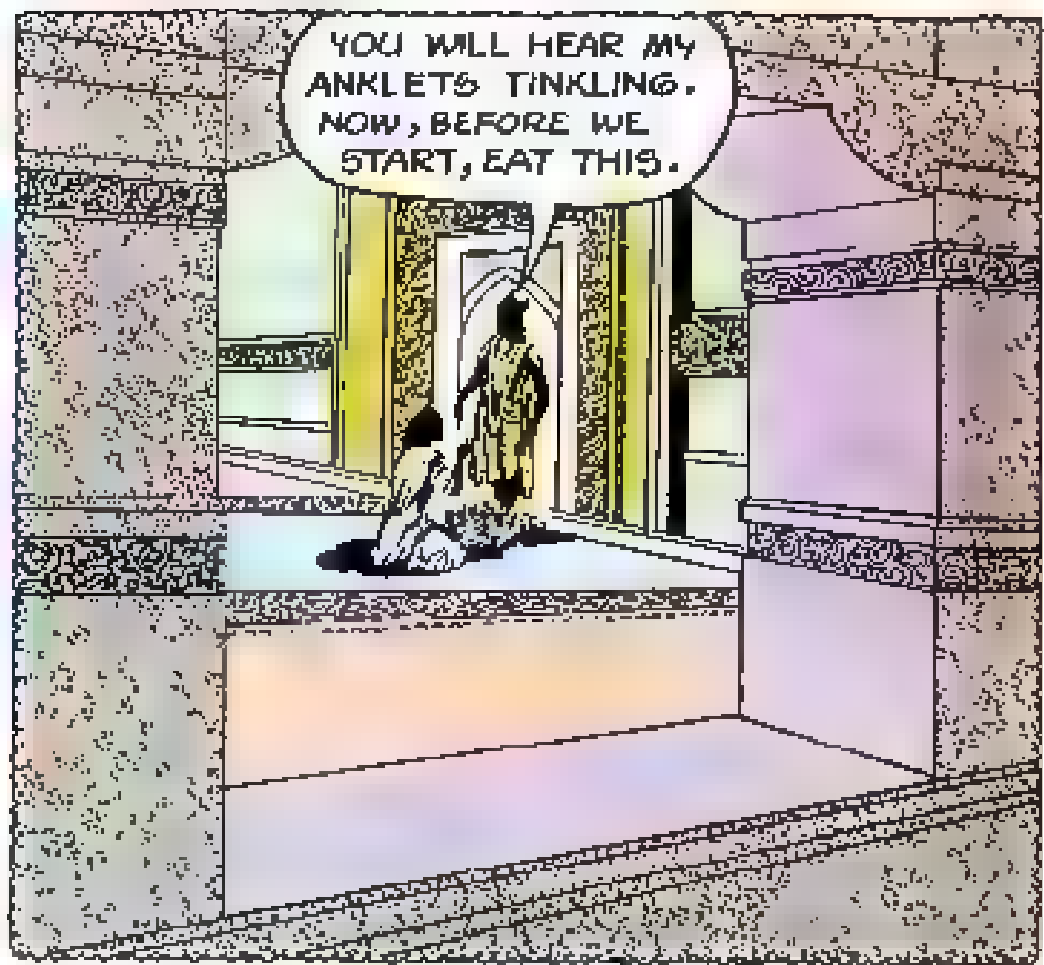
I WILL COME,
MAHINDRA. YOU
WALK AHEAD
I SHALL FOLLOW.
BUT YOU MUST
NEVER LOOK
BACK.



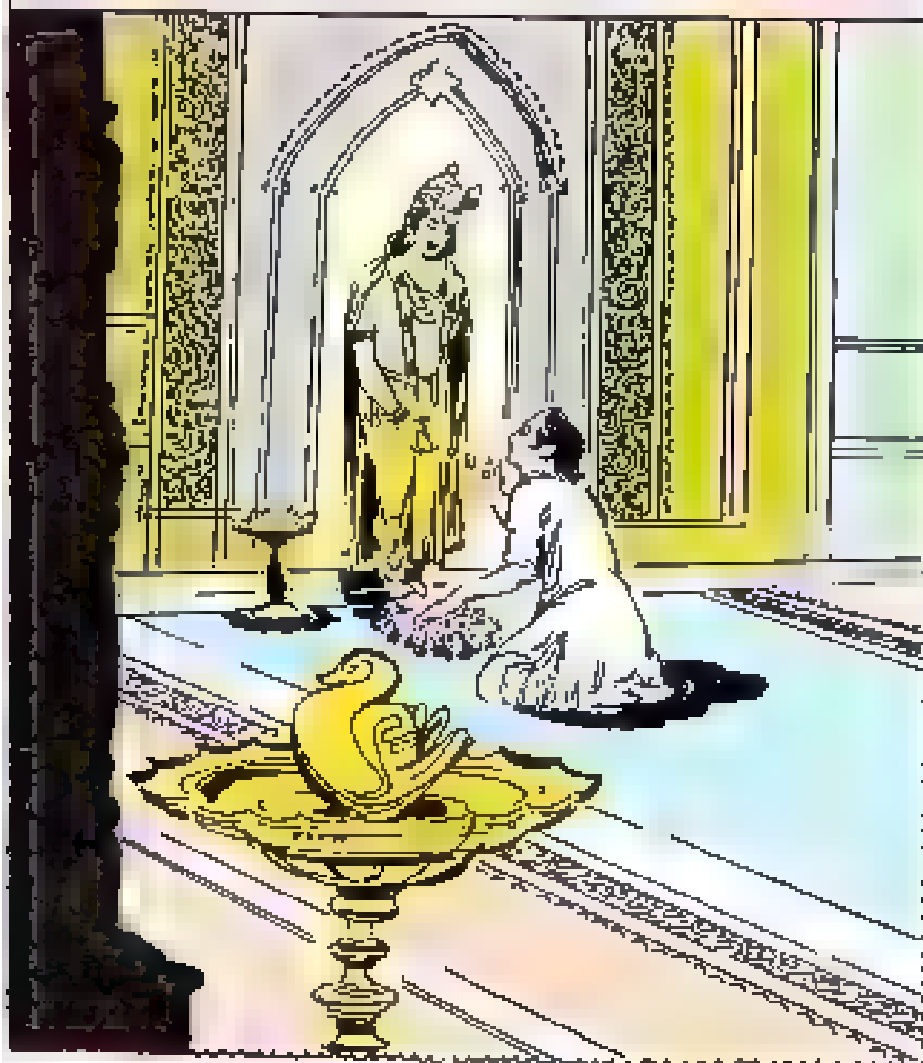
IF I DON'T, HOW
WILL I KNOW
THAT YOU ARE
FOLLOWING ME?



YOU WILL HEAR MY
ANKLETS TINKLING.
NOW, BEFORE WE
START, EAT THIS.



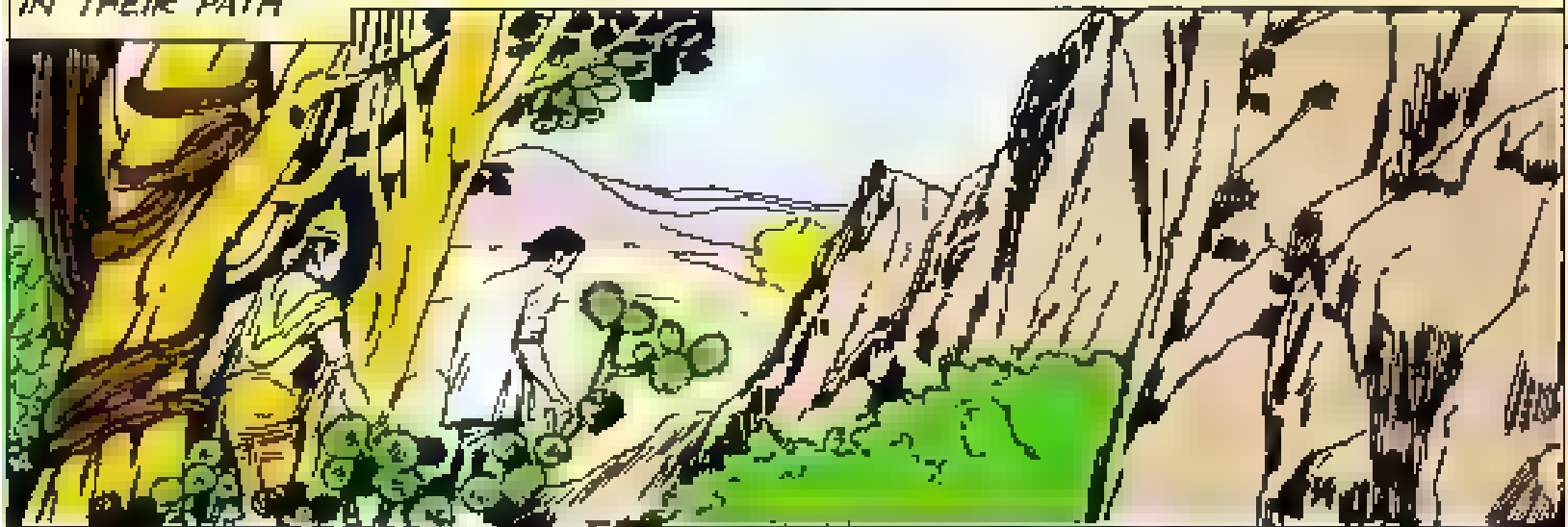
MAHINDRA ATE TO HIS HEART'S CONTENT...



...AND THEN WOKE UP,
REFRESHED AND INVIGORATED.



THE JOURNEY WAS LONG AND ARDUOUS. SOMETIMES, THERE WOULD BE A MOUNTAIN IN THEIR PATH



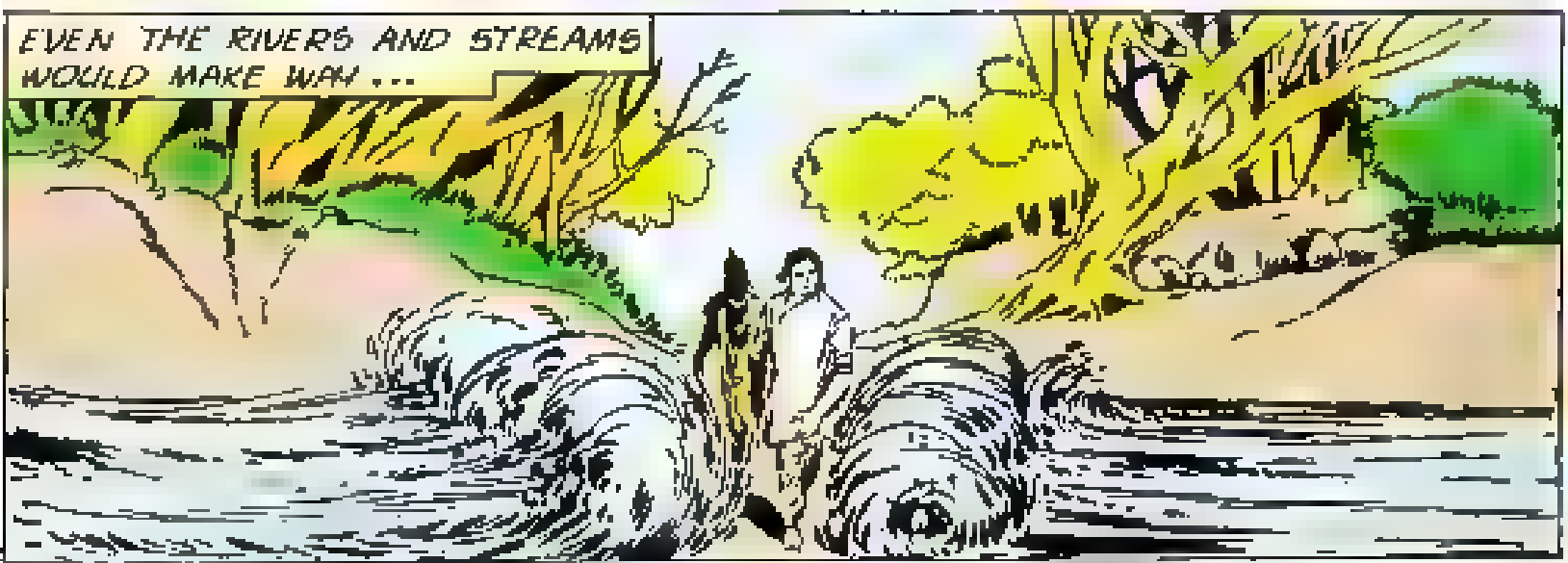
BUT AS MAHINDRA LOOKED HELPLESSLY AT IT...



...IT WOULD PART,
AND HE WOULD GO ON.



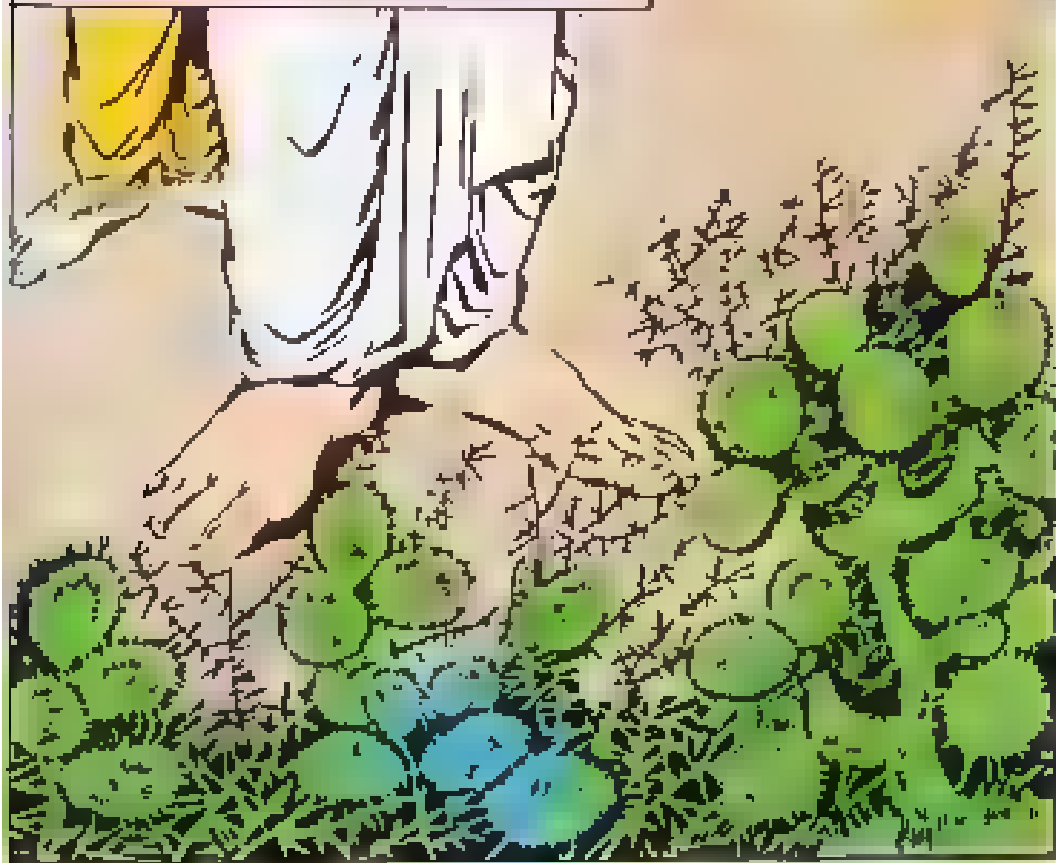
EVEN THE RIVERS AND STREAMS
WOULD MAKE WAY...



...FOR MAHINDRA TO WALK ACROSS



THE THORNS IN THE PATH ...



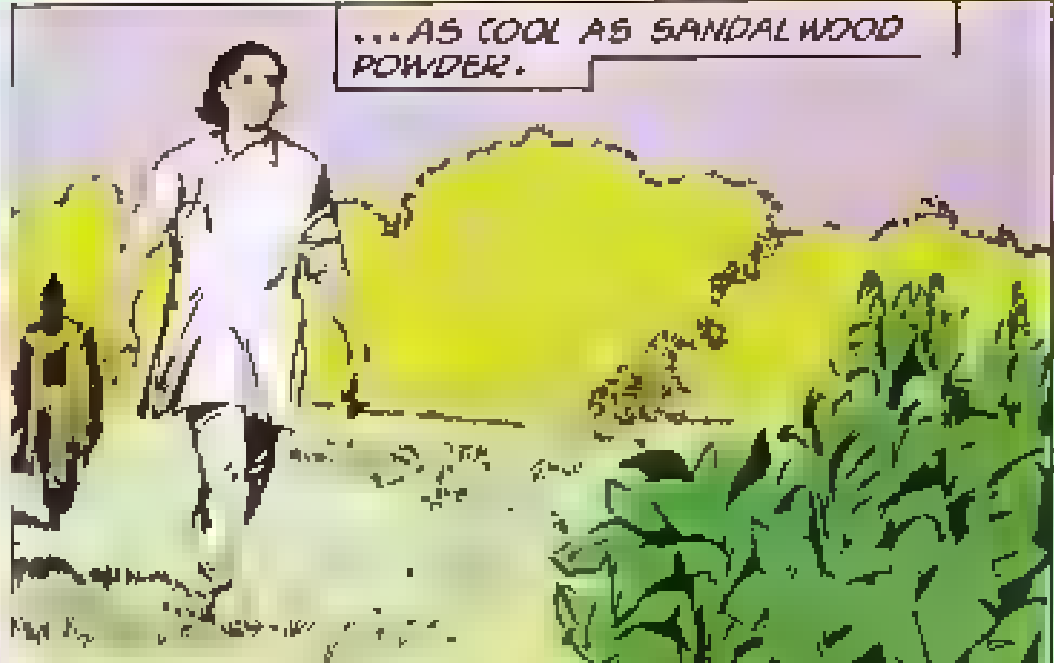
...BECAME SOFT FLOWERS
AND...



...THE HOT SAND ...

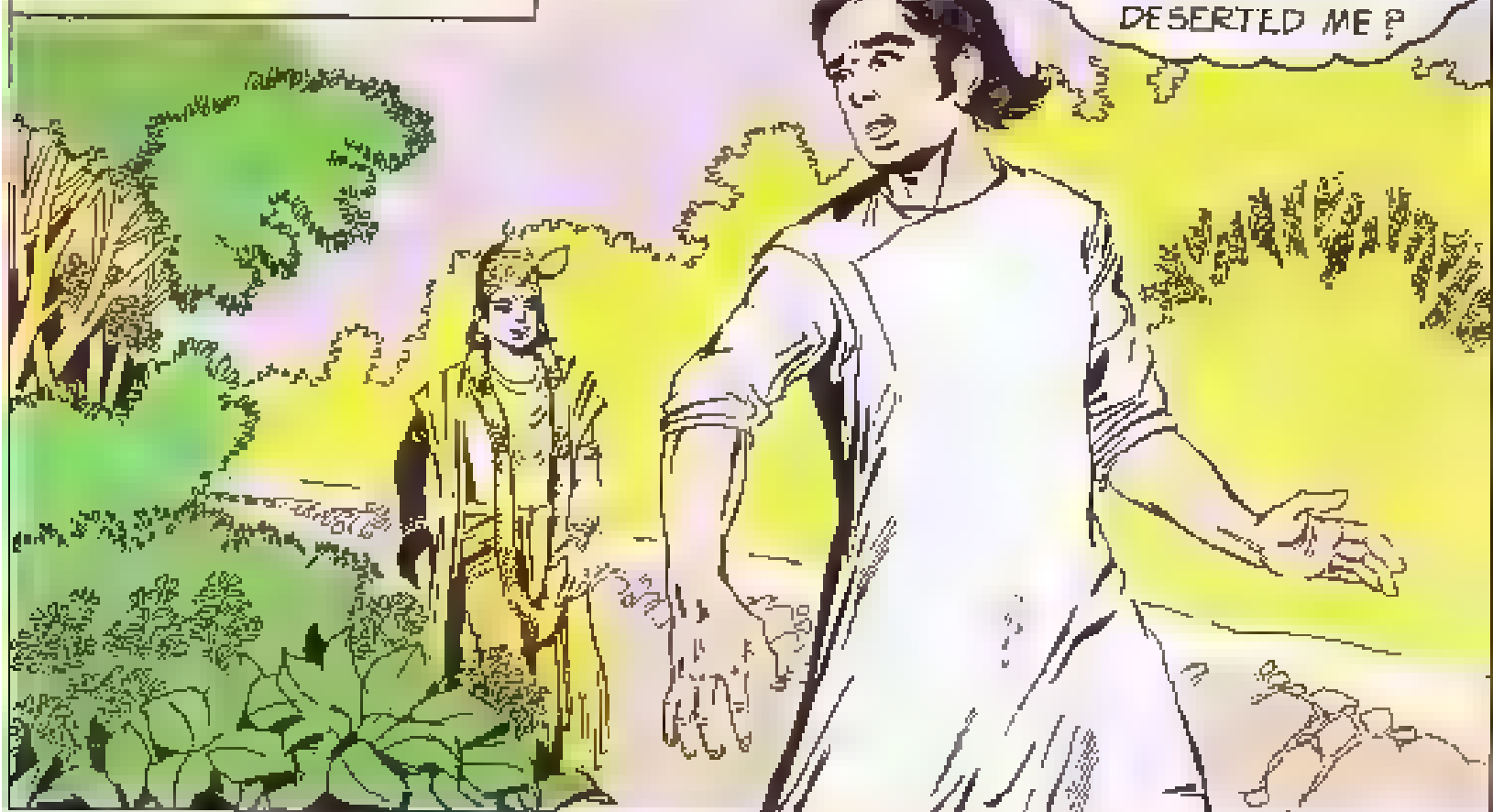


...AS COOL AS SANDALWOOD
POWDER.

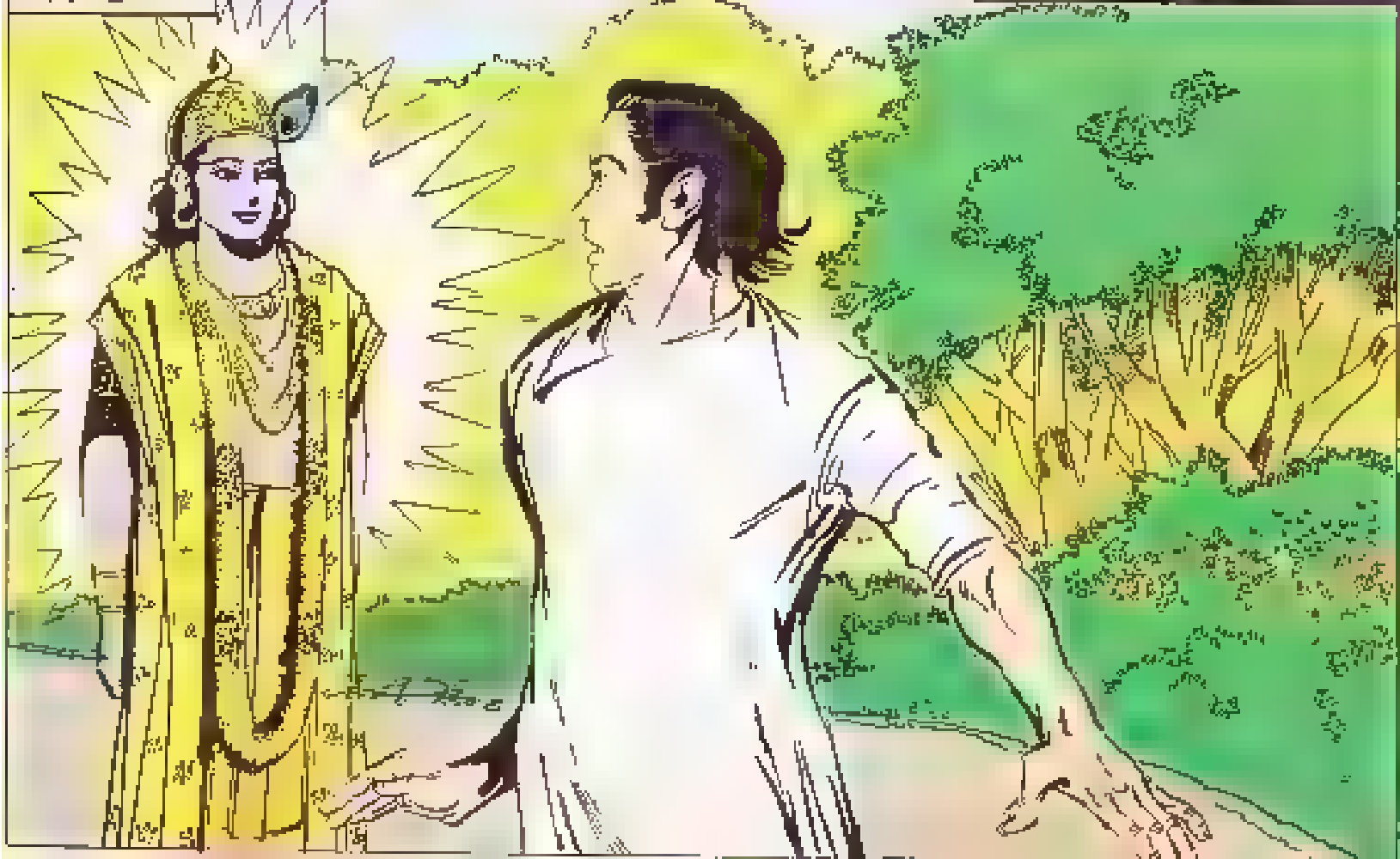


A FEW DAYS LATER, JUST WHEN MAHINDRA WAS ABOUT TO REACH HIS VILLAGE, HE PAUSED.

I CANNOT HEAR THE TINKLE OF HIS ANKLETS. HAS THE LORD DESERTED ME?



HE TURNED AROUND TO LOOK AND THERE WAS THE LORD - TURNED INTO STONE.



MAHINDRA REALISED THAT THE TINKLE OF THE ANKLETS HAD BEEN MUFFLED BECAUSE SAND HAD GOT INTO THEM.



BUT THE IDOL REMAINED ROOTED TO THE SPOT.



MAHINDRA BECAME DESPERATE



HE RAN TO THE VILLAGE.



THE VILLAGERS WERE WONDER-STRUCK WHEN THEY SAW THAT WHAT MAHINDRA CLAIMED WAS TRUE.

THE LORD HAS INDEED COME TO BEAR WITNESS AND VINDICATE HIS DEVOTEE.



THE VILLAGE CHIEF CONFRONTED RAGHAV.

DO YOU STILL DARE TO CALL MAHINDRA A LIAR?



RAGHAV WAS CONTRITE.

I HAVE SINNED I DID PROMISE TO MAKE THE ORPHAN MY SON-IN-LAW.



THE VILLAGE CHIEF EMBRACED MAHINDRA.

WHO SAYS MAHINDRA IS AN ORPHAN? I ADOPT THIS TRUTHFUL BOY AS MY SON.

LONG LIVE GOPALJI.

LONG LIVE MAHINDRA!



RAGHAV SOUGHT OUT SUKHVIR.

SUKHVIR, I CANNOT ACCEPT YOUR PROPOSAL FOR MY DAUGHTER.



EVEN IF YOU DID, I WOULDN'T HAVE THE COURAGE TO MARRY HER! THE LORD HAS GIVEN HER TO MAHINDRA.

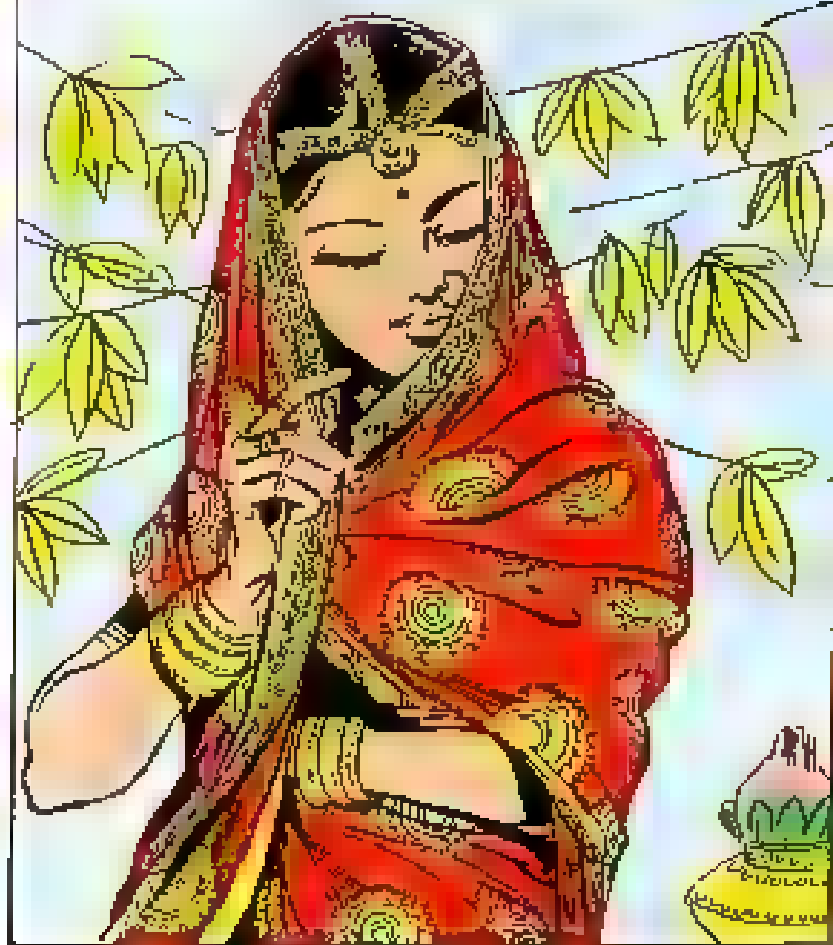


FOR ALL, IT WAS A DAY OF GREAT WONDER; FOR MAHINDRA AND VASANTI, A DAY OF GREAT JOY.

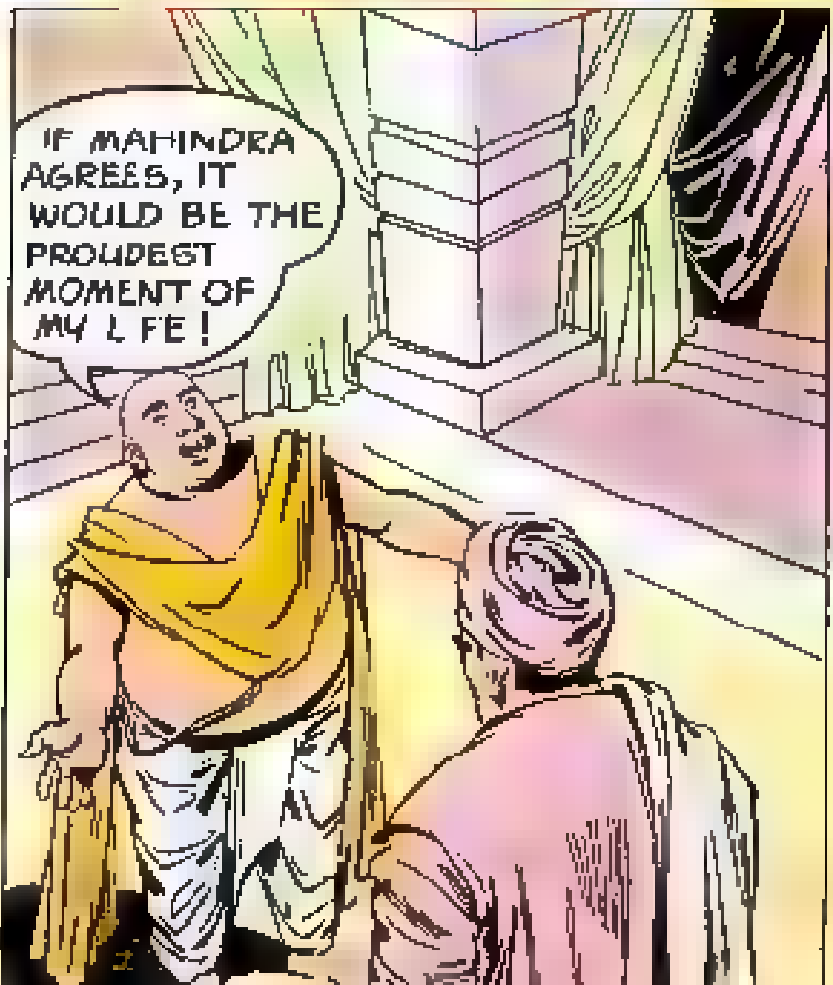
NOTHING WILL EVER COME IN OUR WAY NOW. THE LORD HIMSELF WANTS US TO BE UNITED.



VASANTI LOOKED EXTREMELY CHARMING AS A BRIDE.



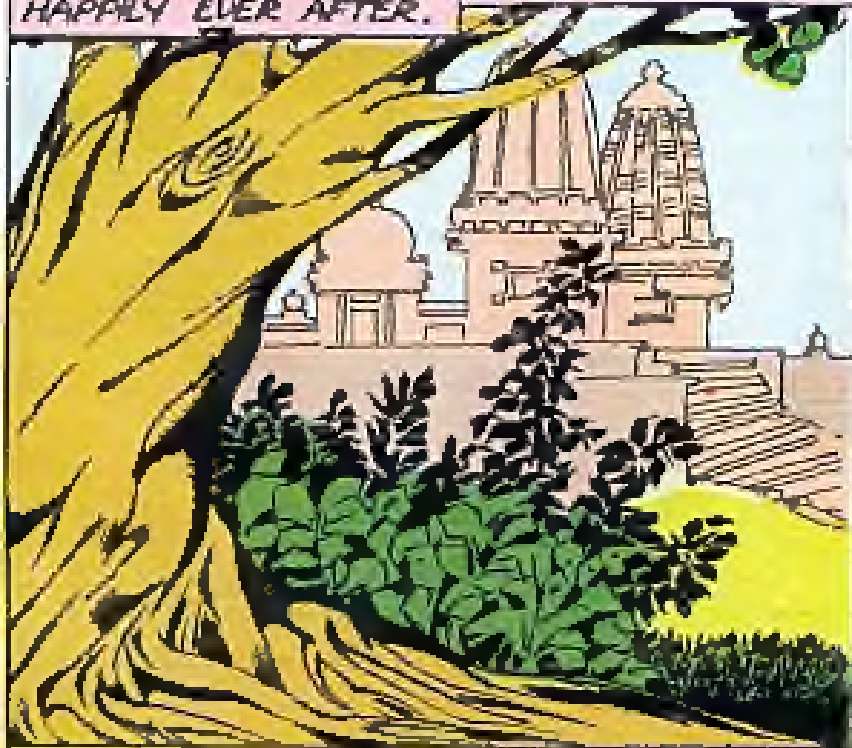
THE VILLAGE CHIEF TOOK THE PLACE OF MAHINDRA'S FATHER.



MAHINDRA OF COURSE AGREED AND THE CEREMONY WAS SOON PERFORMED.



AT A MEETING OF THE VILLAGERS, THE CHIEF PROPOSED THAT A TEMPLE BE BUILT AROUND THE STONE IMAGE OF GOPAL AND SINCE GOPAL HAD COME THERE AS A WITNESS, HE BE CALLED SAKSHI GOPAL. AND SINCE MAHINDRA BROUGHT HIM, HE SHOULD BE THE PRIEST OF THAT TEMPLE. ALL AGREED AND MAHINDRA AND VASANTI LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER.



AMAR CHITRA KATHA

HISTORY

MYTHOLOGY

LEGEND

Acquaint your children with their cultural heritage

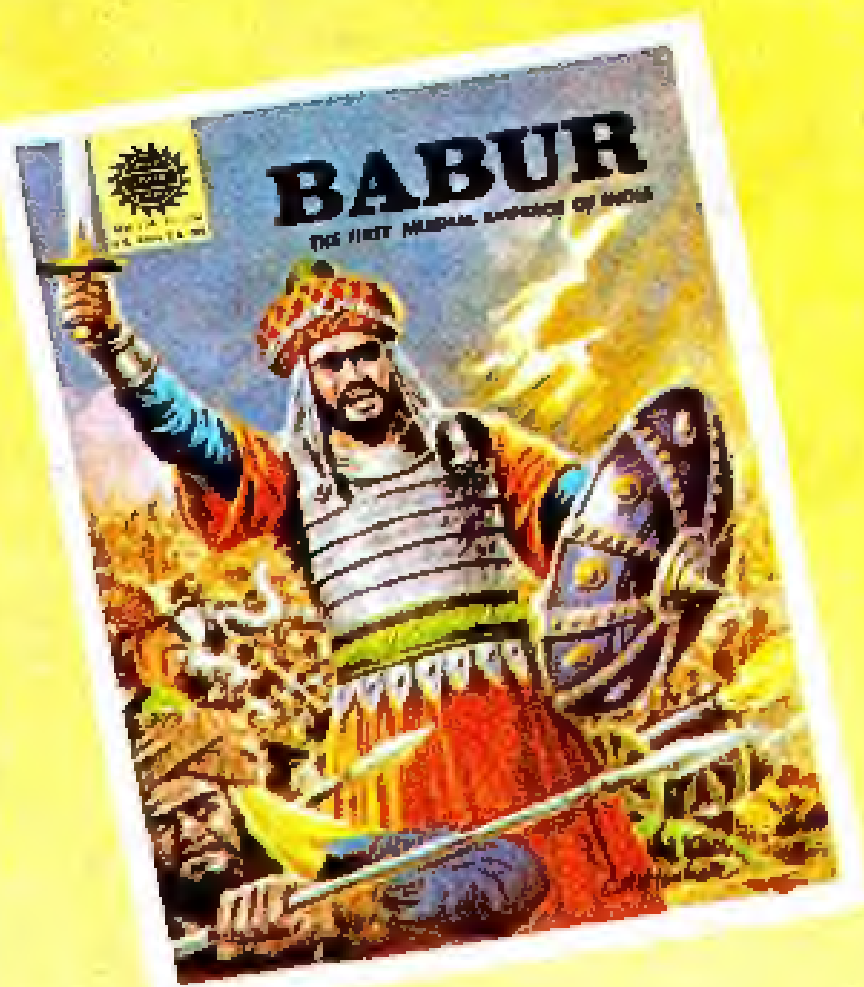
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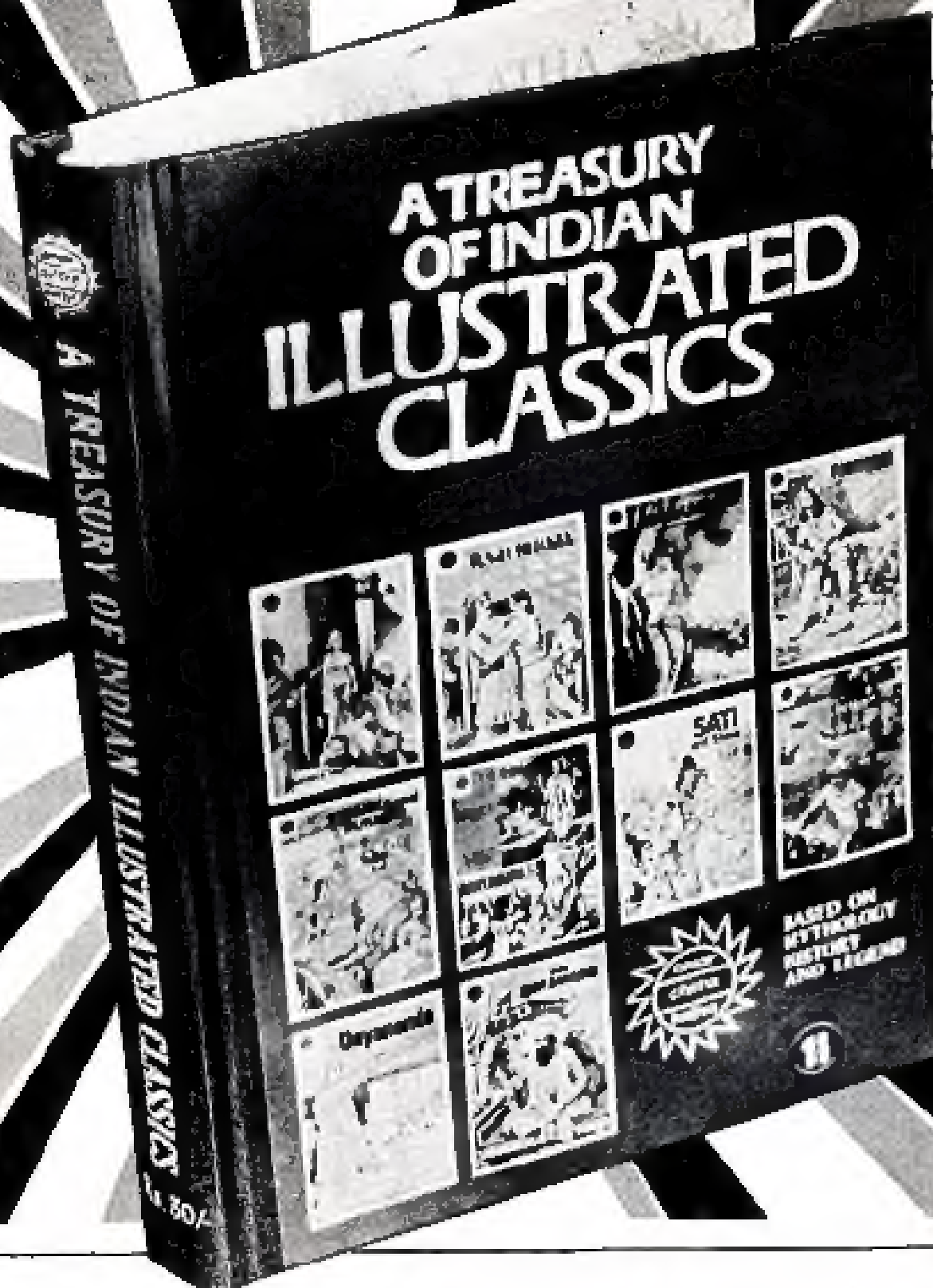
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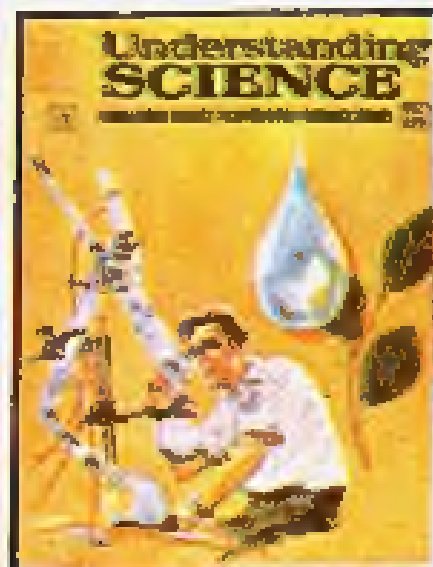
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